WITH OTHER EYES

NORMA LORIMER

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WITH OTHER EYES

BOOKS BY NORMA LORIMER

There Was a King in Egypt

The God's Carnival

On Desert Altars

A Wife Out of Egypt

With Other Eyes

WITH OTHER EYES

BY

NORMA LORIMER

AUTHOR OF "A WIFE OUT OF EGYPT," "THERE WAS A KING IN EGYPT," ETC.

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WITH OTHER EYES

PART I

THE ISLE OF AVALON

CHAPTER I

SPRING was in the year, and the Island valley of Avalon lay in all its greenness and brightness, under the stillness of the Sabbath evening.

A sense of hush, which suggested Nature's hour of Benediction, rested on the flowery meadows, and on the placid streams, and on the soft red roofs of the mediæval city.

To town-tired eyes the valley seemed to have been blessed, to be resting under the grace of the Laying-on of Hands.

A white road, made by Roman legionaries, along which devout pilgrims for many centuries had so unquestioningly trod, lay pointing the way to forgotten shrines and miraculous waters, the ancient healing wells of Avalon.

Above this haunt of peace, graced with the beauty of holiness and the dignity of Time, was a high clear sky, of the deepest blue. Its blueness was intensified by masses of quickly-moving clouds, floating mountain-tops, which seemed to have severed themselves from Italy's snowy Alps, and drifted to this quiet Island valley.

They gave the heavens an architectural majesty, and brought to man's mind the genius of Michelangelo.

This resemblance of the majestic clouds to Italy's eternal snows was suggested by the spiritual atmosphere which quickens the ancient sanctuary of Avalon, in no less a degree than the spirits of St. Francis and St. Clare quicken and sanctify the Umbrian hillsides round the sacred city of Assisi.

Avalon has little connection with the outer world; like Assisi,

it prefers to remain a spiritual background rather than a progressive centre, placid rather than prosperous. The stranger in search of rest will not find its Arcadian stillness disturbed by the siren whistles of modern traffic, while—out of reverence, it may be, to the memory of St. Joseph of Arimathæa, at whose shrine, in the Middle Ages, almost as many pilgrims gathered annually as at the famous shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury—no trains are permitted to leave or arrive at Glastonbury on a Sunday. In this, the oldest ecclesiastical foundation in England, the Seventh Day is still the Lord's Day. Here men set it apart for Him; here girls dress themselves for it; here housewives clean their homes for it, and farmers house their beasts for it.

The seventh-day calm in the valley is the repose of its week-days intensified and deepened by the spirit of prayer in the minds of men. You can feel Sunday in the air; the very actions of the beasts in the meadows suggest it; the swinging of the cow's tail is not the quick tail-switching of a week-day —far from it; it is the gentle movement of a day of rest. The birds, as well as the beasts—all are conscious of its sanctity, from the deep slow cawing of the rooks, homing their familiar way to settlements in ancient trees, to the throat-notes of the thrush, who, on the Lord's Day, restrains the passion of his song.

The gay wild flowers, which a wet spring had so lavishly bestowed upon the meadows and untrimmed hedges, lit up the land until it sparkled like a jewel, but they gave no sensuous beauty to the scene. There is nothing pagan about the Christian Valley of Avalon.

Just as in Assisi the company of saints and pilgrims seems in keeping with the atmosphere of the city, so at Glastonbury the sudden meeting with Joseph of Arimathæa would cause little surprise to a lonely stranger who might be wandering through its streets and watery byways.

On such an evening, near a meadow, whose tall daisies and buttercups decked the slopes of Weary-all Hill, a girl, a pilgrim from a far country, was lying on her back, gazing up at the blue sky overhead.

The gold buttercups which carpeted the meadows were to her the leaf-gold with which the monks had covered the back-

grounds of their illustrated missals. The white daisies, the blue veronicas and the purple violas punctuated the meadows just as delicately painted flowers decorate the golden pages of mediæval missals.

The blue of forget-me-nots, which marked the passage of a hidden stream leading from the Chalice Well, reminded the girl of a river bordered with flowers in "The Hours of the Virgin," a velvet-bound family possession which had lain for as long as she could remember inside a glass-covered table in her grandmother's drawing-room. It was a token of the religion for which her forefathers had left their homes in the old world, hoping to find tolerance in the new.

The Holy Hill, the flower-decked meadows, the one high church-spire, very grey and slim against the golden background, were all familiar to her; they were all in the miniatures.

This new-old world of Avalon made her feel a pilgrim, and very far from home. The spirit of stillness linked the place with the past.

After weeks of moisture and rain, the grass was not dry enough to lie upon for very long with safety, so after gazing at the landscape from many points of view—from under her arms, with her slim body bent almost double; from her knees, with her head bowed down and upwards; from a standing attitude, which necessitated the throwing of her head backwards until her eyes saw the Gothic architecture of the white clouds, surrounded by the green and gold of the meadows, and the tops of the houses, and the church-spire, upside down—she shook out her skirts, and became a normal being once more.

As she stood slimly upright, she faced a stranger, a young man who, to her mind, was the very embodiment of English good looks and conventional breeding. Noticing the glint of humour in his eyes, she felt that some sort of apology was necessary for her extraordinary behaviour—that is to say, if he had been watching her odd gymnastics, which she felt sure he had.

Her hat had fallen to the ground, her hair was disordered by its contact with the flowers of the meadow. Gleaming petals of buttercups powdered its darkness with patches of pure gold, while the small heads of bruised veronicas dotted her white frock with blue.

Herrick's lines:

> "A sweet disorder in the dress
> Kindles in clothes a wantonness . . ."

were exquisitely applicable to the girl's appearance at that moment.

"I have been looking at the world from upside-down," she said. "I suppose you were watching me?"

"I was," he said—he spoke with equal frankness. "Did you find it good?"

The girl's candid manner amused him. She was completely self-possessed. "It is just like an illuminated missal. I have one at home, and the resemblance made me homesick. It's odd how such a tiny thing can flood our minds with a thousand *big* memories, isn't it?"

"Then you are a stranger to Avalon?"

"Why, certainly! My home is very far from here. But I didn't feel at all sad or far away until I thought of that little book. 'The Hours of the Virgin'—took me right back."

"Don't think of it now," he said. "It's too fine an evening to be sad."

"I wasn't definitely sad," she said. "Not a bit—only a little homesick, for, in an odd way, this Somerset valley resembles the valley I live in. It, too, is historically romantic, and it has a famous well which strangers visit."

The words were spoken, the man thought, to arouse his interest. The girl was too frank to be a coquette, yet she was sure enough of herself to seek to provoke his curiosity. He was already conscious of her attractions as a woman, and he knew that he could best provoke her interest in himself as a man by refraining from asking her where her valley lay.

"I am glad you like Avalon," he said. "It is my country. I have just returned to it after a long spell in London. I invariably climb to the top of Weary-all Hill before I do anything else, just to clear my lungs."

"And your eyes, too, I should think! It's so beautiful! That old grey church down there is mothering the red-roofed town just as a hen mothers her chickens. It pleases me almost as much as the famous Abbey ruins."

"How did the church look in the upside-down world?" He

hazarded the remark simply to detain her, for her soft felt hat was being ruthlessly pressed close down upon her dark head. She was obviously going to dismiss him with a frank "Good evening."

"Quite beautiful, of course. When I admire a scene very much, I always look at it upside-down. I suppose it struck you as odd?"

"For the moment it did. I suppose it is only when you are in the country that you look at it that way?" His eyes gleamed. This stranger smiled with his eyes delightfully; they spoke a hundred things at the moment. "It wouldn't be so easy to do it in London."

They both laughed. A flash of Irish humour illuminated the girl's distinctly tragic type of beauty.

"Imagine lying on one's back in the Strand!" he said.

"I shouldn't want to," she replied. "It's only when the world is beautiful that I feel I must see it upside-down."

"But the Strand can look beautiful, with a beauty all its own—the charm of London is not wanting in the Strand on a slightly misty evening, when a low winter sun is setting."

"I've been in London city so little—I can't say. When I was in the Strand my only idea was to get out of it again with all my bones intact! I confess that I had no eyes for atmospheric effects."

"London is the most temperamental city in the world," he said. "There are times when it is prosaic and hideous, and there are times when it is so wonderful that it is a city of mystery and charm."

"Then Turner was not exaggerating? Of course I went to see his pictures in the Tate Gallery—I am a good tourist, you see!"

"Not a scrap, if you strike the right hour and the right atmosphere. On the Embankment you can see a more Turneresque effect than ever Turner dared to paint. You should have sailed down the Thames to Greenwich, and met the ships, with their big brown sails flapping, through the soft lights of greys and oranges and misty blues, and seen St. Paul's dome looking like a balloon in the distance. You would have understood Turner better if you had." He paused just a little ashamed of his enthusiasm.

Her hat was fastened on her head—or, to speak more exactly, she had pushed her head into her hat. The man wondered if she was anxious to hide the ever-changing blue of her eyes, or whether her soft hat was always worn that way to protect the whiteness of her forehead. He was not the first man who has cursed the modern fashion of wearing hats.

"Good evening! I must be going back now." She spoke decidedly.

She was wondering whether the man had been climbing up the hill or coming down it when he came across her. She had not yet been to the top, and she had meant to do so; but she had better give up the idea, and say that she was returning to the town. That he would accept his congé, she did not doubt.

"Have you seen the view from the top?" he asked. "It is well worth the climb, and if you are only returning to Glastonbury so as to get rid of me, I'll walk up the other side if you like!"

A warm blush and a smile came simultaneously to the girl's pale face. "No, I haven't been to the top yet, but it will keep—the view has been here for so long, it won't run away now. And I have dawdled too long already. Besides, if you walked up the other side, we should meet at the top." She smiled again; the idea was absurd.

"Then why not come to the top with me?" he said. "It won't take you many minutes, and I could tell you the points of interest." He looked at her quizzically. "I won't bite because I haven't been introduced, you know, and I am really quite respectable, after a fashion, and few of us are more than that."

Laughingly the girl turned and began to climb the hill.

"Why is it called Weary-all?" she said. "It isn't really so hard to climb as Tor Hill. I went to the top of the Tor on the wrong side last night, and I had to go most of the way on my hands and feet."

"You seem fond of acrobatic methods! I think it is called Weary-all because legend says that Joseph of Arimathæa, who is supposed to have landed in Wales and wandered with his eleven disciples to Somerset, reached the Isle of Avalon on Christmas Day, and being very weary they sat themselves down

on this hillside. No doubt they enjoyed the view of the orchard-hills in the midst of the marshes. . . . That, of course, is pure legend! If you want the real derivation of the word, I believe it's a corruption of Orwall—Over-all."

"Oh no, I don't! Leave it at the legend, please! Don't spoil the romance of the valley by matter-of-fact derivations!"

"Well, you'll find plenty of legendary romance here if you're in search of it. When you're tired of Joseph of Arimathæa and his flowering staff, you can turn your mind to King Arthur and his Knights, and the Holy Grail."

"Joseph's flowering staff reminds me of Tannhäuser and the Pope's sprouting staff."

"Yes," he said, "except that Joseph left no Venus behind him—or if he did, history does not mention her—and he was pious before his staff sprouted—in fact, it sprouted because he was so pious."

They stopped suddenly at a spot marked with a stone and an inscription.

"This marks the site," he said, "of the two thorns which sprang from Joseph's staff. They were only hewn down by the soldiers of Oliver Cromwell—this records their death."

The girl made a face. "Oh, those hateful Puritans!"

"Your sympathy is on the other side?"

"My sympathies are never with intolerance! But did the thorn really blossom each Christmas Day?"

"Yes, and every year they still contrive to have a piece of flowering thorn on the altar at St. John's Church." He smiled. "Shall I be killing romance again if I tell you that it's not so very difficult in this soft mild climate, because the thorn is the *crataegus praecox* which flowers twice a year; it grows freely all over the West Country? And perhaps Joseph was a water finder."

"I certainly prefer the legendary explanation. I don't see the use of visiting these ancient places with an entirely modern and material mind."

"We stick to local legends," he said. "We are very proud of them. For instance, those fields lying down there are still familiarly known as 'the Vineyards,' because they are mentioned under Glastonbury in the Doomsday Book as 'three arpents of vineyards.' "

"How nice! That's what I came to England to enjoy."

When they reached the top of the hill the view was so enchanting that she became enthusiastic. She found herself talking to her companion as if they were friends. It is true that their conversation was almost limited to geographical and historical features, but they were young, and the country was bathed in the very ether of legendary romance and poetry.

He pointed out a little town in the green valley below, lying in the peat moors to the south of Glastonbury, and told her that it was called Street, and that it owes its name to the fact that it lies on the old Roman street or road to Exeter. The girl gazed at it long and steadily; he wished that she would look at him instead.

"To-day," he said, "it owes its existence to boot and shoe, and to its limestone quarries."

"I don't suppose you can understand how greatly these things appeal to us," she said gravely. "Is it worth going to see?"

"Scarcely, I think, from your point of view, unless you are really fond of antiquarianizing. I believe there are the remains of a Roman villa on that hill." He came near to her and pointed with his stick. "You can see it—Ivy Thorn Hill it is called—and there is a rather good little museum with some interesting fossils in it. They have been discovered in the limestone quarries, and have thrown a good deal of light on the ancient history of the place; they prove that Street and Glastonbury were closely in touch with each other in the old days. You can go by omnibus from Glastonbury to Street, but if you haven't lots of time to spare, I'd advise you to leave Street alone."

"But I have lots of time," she said. "I like the way it lies, and I like its simple name of Street, and the name of its hill. Ivy Thorn Hill. . . ." She repeated the name slowly to herself. "The names here are as pretty as the names at home," she said aloud, "at least, almost. Weary-all Hill, Chalice Hill, The Isle of Avalon, Fishers Hill, Magdalen Street, and Glastonbury itself—aren't they full of story?"

"I suppose they are," he said. "Probably it's because they have been so familiar to me all my life that I don't think about them. The town looks well from here, doesn't it?"

"Indeed it does!" she said eagerly. "Look at the red roofs

against the green valley in this wonderful light, and that dear old grey church rising up above it all—it's so mediæval and big! I love it! What churches they did build in Catholic times! I should think their size had little to do with the number of worshippers they accommodated; it was just to do honour to the glory of God."

"Or to the Church!" he said. "Don't you think the church was always more than God to the ecclesiastics? Or the Saint it was dedicated to, and whose relic it was built to hold? A pilgrimage church used to bring vast wealth to a city. That was why the churches often gave huge sums for spurious relics. The demand for relics started a brisk trade in rubbish, which the credulous believed in."

"Now that's killing romance again!" she said. "And please remember that I don't want to hear that King Arthur wasn't buried in the Vale of Avalon, for I saw his stone coffin in the Abbey ruins only this morning, and I'm going to believe it's true! And also please don't do away with the romance of the Holy Grail, and the Chalice Hill, or the healing powers of Joseph's Well, or give scientific reasons for its—medicinal efficacy!"

"Certainly not!" he said. "May I tell you instead something about the geological and geographical features of the place?"

"Why, yes, please do, if they won't detract from the charm of the scene. To me it's just full of poetry and romance! These little streams, covered with mauve ranunculuses, make it ever so like an illuminated Missal."

They had turned their backs on Street, and were looking over the meadows and the city towards the soft blue hills on the horizon.

"Some people say that these watery meadows and all this valley once formed a bay of the sea. The Mendip Hills, the Quantocks and the Polden Ridge formed the old coastline. Their gigantic cliffs do suggest the sea-lashed rocks of a coastline, don't you think?"

The girl cast her eyes over the line he indicated. "It certainly looks as if it had once been the sea! It's just a green bay of meadows, with hills encircling it, isn't it?"

"There are legends which tell of how ships sailed up from the Bristol Channel to ports which lay on the estuary. Anyhow,

it's quite certain that in prehistoric times Glastonbury stood either on an island or on a peninsula, and that all these meadows were either a lake or an inland arm of the sea. There is quite a large lake village near Glastonbury; some of the things they dug up in it are in the museum here."

"Is there anything to see at the lake village itself?" Her eyes brightened. "Any little brown men with canoes and long poles?" She spoke laughingly.

"No, nothing at all at the present moment but buttercups and daisies. After the settlement was excavated, and the things which were found in it were put into the museum, the place was allowed to go back again to grazing land. Still, if you care to make an expedition, and if we by any good chance should get properly introduced to one another, I should be only too glad to show you the site. My father is a keen antiquarian—he helped to excavate it. That's how I have been telling you these things—they aren't first-hand."

The girl hoped in her heart that they would meet with the necessary introduction, but all she said was, "Are cows just browsing on the top of the village now? Is there absolutely nothing to be seen?"

"No, nothing at all," he said. "You must remember that the settlements of these little brown Iberians were no longer here even when Julius Cæsar made his famous landing on the Island, so you can't expect much, can you?"

The girl smilingly agreed. They next tried to discern the towers of Wells Cathedral and the Bristol Channel, but a soft evening mist was creeping over the landscape.

"It all reminds me more and more of my own home," she said. "We point out to visitors the historical Bay of Minas, and Blomidon rises out of the Valley of Grand Pré just as the hills here rise out of these flowery meadows."

"Then your home is in Nova Scotia?" he asked.

"Why, yes, I come from Acadie."

"'All the way from Acadie, from Acadie,'" she said, adapting a line from a poem which she knew would not be familiar to him. "Yes, all the way from Acadie, where at the moment the meadows will be knee-deep with hay-grass and aromatic with honey-clover and big marguerites. Oh, it's really Arcady, and I love it!"

As she spoke she looked like a fair wanderer from Arcady, with the blue of the veronicas and the gold from the buttercups still powdering her dress and hair.

"And do all the people in Acadie look at the world upside-down?" he asked.

"If they have any good sense they do," she said.

"Isn't Grand Pré in the *Evangeline* country?" he said. "That much, and no more, I know about the poem, for I really have forgotten it, if I ever knew anything about *Evangeline.*"

"I don't suppose you ever did," she said, "for Longfellow is no longer fashionable. His clear simplicity received its death-knell when Robert Browning started the craze for cryptic poetry. Still, the Well of Evangeline has its pilgrims, and so has the Valley of Grand Pré."

"Please don't think I'm proud of not knowing," he said. "I just don't. I've a sort of an idea that the poem is very sentimental and 'goody-goody.' The name Evangeline is associated in my mind with a love-sick maiden of the old pious order of Early Victorian heroine."

"Is that so?" the girl smiled, and her smile was as cryptic as any line of Robert Browning's poems.

"Am I not right?" he asked.

"The poem is rather anti-English, I suppose, for history will no longer allow that the Acadians were unfairly treated by the English Government."

"Does Longfellow infer that they were?"

The girl looked at him and laughed full-heartedly. "You certainly don't know much about the poem, do you?"

"No—I told you I didn't. Evangeline sounds to me such a silly name; it puts me off—not that I ever thought of reading the poem."

"But it has a lot to do with English history," she said laughingly. "Oh, you are all alike! I never met an English person yet who knew a word about the history of their Colonies!"

"I must apologize for my countrymen, and plead guilty!"

"Longfellow tells the story of the French Acadians and their sufferings from an exaggerated and sentimental point of view; he makes out that their treatment by King George's men was simply brutal. But if you read later history on the subject, you

will be told that the Acadians had been really very, very troublesome to the English, and that the French had been egging them on for years to break and defy every English law, until at last the only thing for England to do was to ship them all off to a new country, where the influence of the French would cease. Besides the soldiers who did it were from Massachusetts. That's your history, and the other side to Evangeline."

"I feel ashamed," he said, "to know so little about it. I'll read the poem to-night."

"It might be a good plan," she said. "And a bit of Canadian history to-morrow?"

He laughed. "I quite agree with you that we are horribly ignorant of our own history, let alone the history of our Colonies! Your people come over here, and you all know about the history of the things you are going to see."

She looked at him with her candid smile, a smile which was individual and attractive. It was the first time he had a chance of seeing how really beautiful she was.

"In England you all live beside things of immemorial interest and beauty just as though they were grain stores or jam-factories! And I've discovered that it's bad form to be enthusiastic, and one ought never to be seen with a guide-book; it's better to lose your way than ask it, and to remain ignorant than to read a guide-book! I wonder who set up all your strange ideas of good and bad form?"

"It would be well to see ourselves as others see us," he said. "I suppose it would give us some nasty jars."

"I always feel that this place ought to be Catholic still," she said, by way of turning the conversation. "Monks and nuns would complete the picture, wouldn't they?"

"You come to it as a pilgrim," he said. "The past history of the place is what most interests you about it?"

"Why, it is its *raison d'être!*" she said. "As far as I can see, the present-day people don't live—they are merely existing as a part of the placid, untroubled landscape. They are nice people, but not a good substitute for monks and nuns from a scenic point, are they?"

"I, too, always look upon the place as a sort of sanctuary," he said. "I feel that if I can only get here somehow, I shall be safe from everything that troubles and jars and endangers."

"If it was Catholic, and never had been Protestant, think of how glorious it would be still, with its shrines and its spiritual atmosphere!"

"Are you a Roman Catholic?" he asked, interrupting her.

"Not now. We are not French-Canadians. My mother comes of staunchly Presbyterian stock."

"But the illuminated Missal?" he said.

"Oh, it is a relic of my father's Jacobean ancestors. His people were good Catholics until a generation or so ago."

This conversation had carried them to the bottom of Weary-all Hill. At the corner of Breere Lane and Fishers Hill, the girl suddenly stopped and said good-night.

Feeling that he was dismissed, the man had to say good-night, but not before he had said, "I hope that Fate will be kind enough to allow me to meet you again! It has been kind to allow me to walk with you up the hill."

She laughed. "Isn't it odd when you come to think of it?—someone whom neither of us may know very well will probably say, 'Allow me to introduce Mr. So-and-So,' and then it will be quite correct for us to stop and speak to one another if we meet again, but until then I must say good-bye."

They parted, smiling at the absurdity of conventions.

"Dash it all!" the man said to himself, as he watched her disappearing, with youthful ease of movement, down the hilly street. "She took good care not to introduce herself—she avoided telling me her name. What heavenly blue eyes she's got!"

He wondered what her name was; fitted some to her personality, and quickly rejected them all. Her candour and freshness pleased him; there was something big and untrammelled about her individuality which impressed him even more pleasantly than her beauty. And "she was not the least Colonial." He said the last words with all the unconscious vanity of the insular untravelled Englishman.

These were his most definite thoughts on the subject of their chance meeting, but for the rest of the evening his male sense of her beauty troubled him, and held tenaciously to her.

The persistence of even the most delightful thing can become annoying. To look at the girl's eyes while he was standing near her had been very delightful, but to have their blueness

thrust itself before his own while he was examining some of his father's latest treasures in the way of ammonites and shells, was irritating. And they were so damnably blue, and there was also a smile in them which hurt his vanity.

The girl dismissed him from her thoughts much more quickly. She had a mission to perform for her mother which necessitated the giving of instructions to a dressmaker who lived in a small cottage in Breere Lane.

When they had been given, and the various travelled skirts had been examined, and their shortening discussed, she stepped out from the white cottage into the narrow lane, into the full glow of a golden sunset.

"Quite a nice person!" she said to herself, reflectively. "But how English!"

It was not the dressmaker to whom she was alluding, but to her companion of Weary-all Hill. Her mind travelled over his particular English idiosyncrasies; they were just a token of his nationality.

"Yes, quite nice," she said again. "His mouth is fine but hard, and his eyes—they are hard, too, until he smiles. I should call him very good-looking. He's quite different from our boys—the Canadian expression and the English expression are totally unalike—I notice that more and more!"

The last remark obliterated him from her thoughts, because it made her think of the kindness in the eyes of a man who loved her. She owed him a letter, and in it she wanted to tell him all about the beauty of Glastonbury, and the resemblance of the Vale of Avalon to their beloved Valley of Grand Pré. And there was something else besides which she had to say to him, and which she disliked saying.

He was a cousin to her first cousins, and had been almost a brother to her until she went to school in Montreal. Then their intimacy had ceased, and when they met again, the man, who was a poet and a dreamer, fell in love with her and asked her to marry him. They had crossed the Atlantic in the same steamer, but the journey had not changed the nature of the girl's old affection for her playfellow.

"If a fine sea-voyage can't do it, mamma," she had said, "nothing on earth will."

"Perhaps something in heaven may, Eve," her mother had

said. "And I am old-fashioned enough to prefer marriages made in heaven to any other kind."

This was the end of a conversation which took place that same evening between the mother and daughter, when for the third time the girl sent her old playfellow her refusal. When the letter was written and sealed and posted, and the load was off her mind, she went to bed and dreamed of Grand Pré, and of the wanderings and hardships of Evangeline.

CHAPTER II

And so she was called Evangeline! after all that he had said about the name. And was she one of the cranks of Glastonbury, who posed at living in the Middle Ages, or at least spent their days in trying to revive the arts and crafts and religious dramas of the Middle Ages?

Allan Fairclough looked round the big hall-like room, with its lofty windows and simplicity of detail. The effect pleased him from an æsthetic point of view, because the hand of an artist had arranged everything in it, down to the large bunches of wild flowers which were placed with unerring judgment against backgrounds which made their beauty the most pleasing and decorative. The few pictures on the walls showed that whoever had arranged the room could only tolerate what was either beautiful or necessary.

The old conventual atmosphere still clung to the building. "But what a roomful of cranks!" was Allan's mental summing up of the assemblage. And certainly there was an extraordinary collection of types gathered together.

Evangeline stood out amongst them as something young and normal and vital. Her long string of pale amber beads suited her dark hair, even if it was, in Allan's opinion, a bit too much in keeping with the general æsthetic air and dressing which was a part of the cult of the place. Yet how well it looked on her lettuce green gown. She set off the room to perfection, and suited its sense of wild flowers and country coolness.

It was the evening in the week when the Hostel was practising its old English ballad-singing, with a view to its forthcoming summer festival.

The lady warden of the establishment, whose aim and ambition it was to make the old Chalice-well property, in the Isle of Avalon, once the home of Early Christian anchorites, and closely associated with the legends of King Arthur and

the Holy Grail, a centre for the writing and production of mystery plays, pageants and pastorals, and for the training of those arts and crafts which belong to their production, was a very dear friend of his father's. Her sympathy for the cause of humanity in general, and her good fund of common-sense, saved her from being what the man took her for—a "crank." And she was certainly the reverse of a bore.

Allan Fairclough had met her in the town in the morning, and she had asked him to join their "friendly evening" that same night. He liked the woman, and admired her type, but he had no tolerance for her mediæval craze, so while he thanked her and half promised to come, he mentally resolved to give the "friendly evening" a very wide berth. He "would feel such a fool at it," and he never really knew what they were driving at. "The Glory of God in the Service of Life" was their motto.

When, however, he met the lady warden a second time in the town, and this time she was walking with the girl who liked looking at the world upside-down, and he discovered that the girl was staying at the Hostel, his mind did not give the "friendly evening" quite such a wide berth.

At eight o'clock that evening, without definitely saying to himself that he would go, he found himself ringing at the bell of the big grey stone building, which had once been a monastery, and was ushered into the large room where the guests met for their social evenings.

When he was shown into the room he thought it was empty, for he was a little early, but almost immediately he heard the sound of soft laughter and the moving of seated figures. He turned quickly to where the sound had come from—laughter was scarcely what he had expected to hear.

On a low sofa, almost buried in cushions, he saw the girl of Weary-all Hill. She was nursing a very pretty, fragile-looking lady on her lap; the next instant she had struggled from her low seat, and the lady was placed on her feet on the hearth-rug. As it was impossible to look dignified under the circumstances, the only thing for both women to do was to laugh. The older woman's laughter changed to astonishment when she heard the friendly tones in which her daughter greeted the stranger.

"My mother was looking at this room upside-down," she said. "When we are alone I always nurse her on my lap."

The delicate-looking woman, who resembled an eighteenth-century miniature, and who blushed like a girl, tried to apologise.

"Come, Evangeline," she said, apologetically, "it is getting late. We must dress; the guests will be arriving."

"Yes, mamma, but you really needn't mind looking rumpled and a little untidy, because this gentleman knows we come from Acadie—we're 'Colonials,' in fact—and he would be disappointed if we looked as civilised as the people of Glastonbury!"

The next minute the still bewildered mother and her smiling daughter had disappeared from the room. The mother looked, Allan thought, strikingly small and fragile beside her daughter, who was tall and as lithe in her movements as a Red Indian of the prairies. There was mockery in the look which the girl threw back over her shoulder as the door closed behind her.

* * * * * *

And now they had re-appeared, and the "friendly evening" was in full swing. Old English carols had been sung and country dances had been danced, and legendary dramas had been recited, and he had talked for a long time to the craftsman who was the maker of the "Miracle Play" furniture, and to the instructress who taught banner-making, and to a lady in green who taught the weaving of silver and gold fabrics.

At last, after a long discussion as to whether the genius of folk drama is still with us, and if it can ever be revived, and once again made the medium of education and instruction as it was in the Middle Ages, he was rewarded by the lady warden, who brought up the girl of Weary-all Hill, and introduced him to her in the way in which she had said that they probably would be introduced to each other.

The name Evangeline had kept ringing in his ears ever since the girl's mother had mentioned it. It was associated in his mind now with the bluest of blue eyes and the darkest of brown hair; it seemed ages since he had associated it with the heroine of Longfellow's poem, *Evangeline*.

He had risen from his seat to offer it to Evangeline.

"I have been sitting all the evening," she said. "I prefer standing."

"Well, now that we have been properly introduced, can we go into the garden? I'm rather tired of this—are you?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I don't think Miss Berners would like it if we did. She's going to speak to us about the mid-summer festival and the play she is writing for it, and the gathering of the wood and stuff for the 'ban-fire.'" The girl pronounced the last word very clearly.

"For what sort of a fire?" he asked. His sense of humour, which appealed to the girl, showed in his eyes and softened his face.

"I don't know what sort of a fire a 'ban-fire' is," she said—there was a fight for seriousness in her tones—"but Miss Berners said it was to be a ban-fire, not a bon-fire. I thought you could tell me."

"I wonder what it means?" he said. "The word bonfire really is derived from 'bone-fire'—the fires made from the bones which were burnt at public rejoicings and on great occasions. Of course, their origin is pre-Christian."

"Sacrificial fires, do you mean?"

"Probably. But until very modern times in certain parts of the British Isles, especially in Scotland, the people used to save up their old bones for their midsummer bonfire."

Evangeline's pretty nose went up. "How nasty! I prefer a fire made of wood and leaves, don't you?"

"I don't know anything about a ban-fire. You're sure she said 'ban,' not 'bane'? 'Bane' might have come from the Scotch word 'bane' meaning bone—I have a patient who always speaks of her 'sare banes'—but that would mean just the same as bonfire."

"No," she said, "it was ban-fire distinctly—it was *not* to be a bonfire."

The man laughed, but the girl remained serious. He had hoped that she was not one of the Glastonbury "mediævalites," but he was beginning to doubt it.

Her mother came up at that moment and said, "Evangeline, do come and help me to talk French to the man Miss Berners has just introduced to me—he wants to know so much about French Canada, and I get so tied up for words."

The girl put her arm protectingly round her mother's waist and shoulders. "I'll come and do my best in my best French," she said laughingly, "if you will talk to Dr. Fairclough." She turned to him as she spoke. "Please don't blush, and you needn't feel rude, or want to run away every time you hear my name mentioned. It is Evangeline, and there's no getting away from it, but I'll leave mamma to tell you whether I am love-sick and sentimental and goody-goody or not."

The pretty little woman, who could still look like a girl if radiant youth was not too close at hand, now looked excusably bewildered. As she did so, Allan said to himself, "What a pretty girl she must have been—quite a beauty! So well-bred too, and yet they are Colonials!"

"Evangeline leaves me bewildered," she said, when her daughter had gone. "If you had to follow all the crazy ideas which pass through her mind in one hour, you'd feel as tired as I do! Now, what did she mean about her name? Can you explain it to me?"

"Something with a more connected meaning in it than you fancy," he said laughingly. The girl was "a caution." Yet with all her oddness, she was amazingly attractive. He found himself trying to catch a glimpse of her dark head and amber-encircled throat. How slim she was, and yet not thin! What a suggestion of tragedy lay behind the laughter in her eyes.

"Well," Mrs. Sarsfield said, "she evidently wants me to let you know for some reason or other that she isn't sentimental or love-sick. Of course, I've no proof to offer you, but if you can take my word, I will confess that I wish she was sometimes just a little more so."

"I don't think she's a typical Evangeline in that respect, but to you that remark wants some explaining. I said to your daughter, while I was in ignorance of her name, that the personality of Evangeline was associated in my mind with a love-sick, sentimental type of heroine. I confess to having no correct knowledge of Longfellow's heroine, but somehow she suggests an Early Victorian, goody-goody type to me."

"Oh, I see! And you didn't know that my daughter was called Evangeline?"

"Not until she put you off her knee this evening—not until you said 'Evangeline, it's getting late.' "

The little mother looked at him with a new curiosity in her eyes. She was no fool, even if she had little of her daughter's quickness of brain, and love of surprising people.

"Then you had met before? This evening is not the first time?"

"Ah—there you have caught me!"

"Evangeline did not mention having seen you before." The words were suggestive of the fact that if Evangeline had remembered, she certainly would have told her. The man's self-importance received a slight wound; their meeting had evidently been a thing of little moment!

At this juncture Evangeline joined them again. "The Frenchman is going to sing some old Norman songs, mamma. He's quite a dear, and he's in his element here. I have been telling him some Acadian folklore legends." At this she turned quickly to Allan Fairclough. "And you—were you telling mamma how you came upon me looking at the world upside-down on Weary-all Hill? Poor man!" she said gaily, "he thinks us quite mad, mamma dear, both of us!"

"Oh, Eve," her mother said, "so that's how you behave when you go out for walks by yourself!"

"Which way, little mamma? Looking at the world upside-down, or talking to a man whom I didn't know? This particular man told me that he wouldn't bite if I climbed the hill with him, and so I took him at his word, and found that he is really a walking encyclopædia of local information."

The humour in the girl's eyes more than the substance of what she said, united the three in laughter. It was only when the Frenchman started his Norman songs that their repartee and laughter ceased.

While the really delightful songs were being sung, Allan kept wondering to himself why Evangeline and her mother were living in the Hostel. He could not believe that the girl, with her sense of humour and her downrightness, could take part seriously in all the "tomfoolery," as he called it. He knew the sort of things the community did, and observed—the reverent opening of the Holy Well at twelve o'clock every day, the odd services in the oddly-appointed chapel, the pro-

cessions in mediæval costumes on the festivals of the seasons, the mediæval theatre, with its mystery plays, and the looms for weaving ancient silk and gold fabrics.

Once again the lady warden came to his rescue. She was human, and nothing which was human was beyond her sympathy. Evangeline was the most attractive thing in the room, and the young doctor had been extremely good, in spite of his wandering eye.

"Will you take Miss Sarsfield out into the garden," she said, "if you won't feel it chilly? It's a dear garden at night!"

Allan Fairclough wished that he had never called her a crank, even if he had qualified it with the word "nice." Now he told himself that she was a "jolly good sort, and awfully elegant!"

So out into the garden they went, and there, under the beauty of the stars, and the silence of the Chalice Hill, the girl's mood became more serious, less bantering.

At the end of the terraced garden, which lay surrounded by orchards, was the famous Holy Well, whose healing waters rush in great quantities from a hidden rock chamber. Of course they examined it; and there was much for youth to talk about in a place so individual and so steeped in romantic history. But although the girl's bright bantering tones had changed, she still made it impossible for her companion to discover what her own views were about the Chalice Well settlement, and its cult of mediævalism.

The training at Chalice Well is based on the conviction that the genius of folk drama is still with us. Through its medium much that is precious in the great teachings of the past may be preserved to us, and some prophetic foreshadowings be possibly ventured for the future.

How much the girl sympathised with the movement Allan could not discover. Her admiration of and affection for the lady warden would not permit of any form of criticism. He knew that guests who did not necessarily belong to the cult were received into the Hostel at a moderate sum per week. He hoped she was one of them.

From things impersonal to things more intimate, in that they expressed ideas not relative to the institution, their conversation drifted. Allan Fairclough found the girl an appre-

ciative listener, and what man does not think the woman clever who has the gift of listening sympathetically.

Allan's ambition was to be a specialist, and not a provincial doctor. He told Evangeline that. "If I put ambition aside," he said, "I could step as partner into my father's business, and make a pretty good income almost directly." His father had certainly the first practice in the town and locality. But it was not a life which appealed to the young man, who was conscious of the fact that in his own line he had ability, and that with patience he could carve out a career for himself in London. He knew that the one thing which specializing meant was not marrying early, and certainly not marrying early a girl with no money. He had seen his fellow-medical students married to girls without a farthing having to content themselves with settling down and making a practice in some place which held out no possible future as far as a career or position were concerned.

Allan was still "walking the hospitals," but he had been signalled out by an ear specialist, who had hinted that he might need a junior partner in his practice. Allan had the necessary qualifications in the way of personal appearance, social position and ease of manner, all of which are almost as necessary as brains to a doctor who hopes to obtain a position in a fashionable district in London.

His father naturally would have liked him to remain in Glastonbury, where he would have had his companionship all his life, but his ambition for his only child urged him to fall in with his boy's wishes.

"Then don't fall in love, Allan, my boy!" was what he always said. "Your expenses in London will be enormous. Keep a level head with the pretty girls, or give up ambition and settle down to romance and provincial domesticity! There's plenty of interest in Glastonbury if you will let yourself be interested!"

And so it came to pass that Allan approached almost every girl he met with the one idea in his mind that he was not going to let himself fall in love with her.

With Evangeline, he felt that he was playing a dangerous game. She was becoming more pleasing to his senses and intelligence every minute, and he was already beginning to

see tempting visions of a very happy life, and a desirable one, with just such a girl, even in dull out-of-the-world Glastonbury.

It was not until they were retracing their steps from the higher ground of the herb-scented garden (herb and medicinal plant cultivation was one of the Chalice Hostel industries) and were passing a building which had been the chapel when the Hostel was a monastery and seminary, that he discovered that the girl was as unaffected by the cult of the place as he was himself. She was merely a paying guest.

"Shall we come into the chapel?" she said. "Have you ever seen it?"

"Not since its Popish days," he said. "Do they use it for service now? What or whom *do* they worship?"

"I don't quite know," Evangeline said, "for I make no pretence of understanding the beliefs or the ethics of their cult. I told Miss Berners when we came here that mamma and I must be perfectly free—I couldn't be a humbug or pose at living up to what I don't feel."

"I see!" he said aloud, while in his heart he said, "Thank God you can't!"

"Mind," she said, as they paused before entering the chapel, "there is a great deal about it which appeals to me tremendously—they are such charming people, so cultivated and so gentle; if it's their religion that makes them so—well, the practical result is very delightful! 'The Glory of God in the Service of Life' makes them almost saintly in their reverence for everything, even poverty and misery."

"A little too much so for me!" he said. "I think I'd prefer being a little more in touch with the present-day life, even if it has its ugly side."

"You'd rather make medicines than missals?"

"I'd rather develop science for the benefit of the suffering, than sing Saxon songs round Holy Wells, and wear a painted crown in a mystery play."

Evangeline refrained from meeting his eyes.

They entered the chapel, which was in total darkness, except for the light from one lamp—a little basin full of oil with a floating wick in it—which was placed on a ledge at the foot of a tall black wooden cross, which reached from the floor to within two inches of the ceiling. There were a few

seats in the building, and one round black oak table in front of the cross.

On this table there were three circles of wild flowers, exquisitely arranged in low round vases. The circle of vases was connected by small green leaves, laid on the black oak. The effect was very beautiful.

"They use this chapel for the presentation of religious subjects in drama as well as for prayer. They have open-air representations in the garden, and the more sensational plays in the theatre. That big cross represents unity, not sacrifice."

"Have you ever seen one of their festivals?"

"Not yet. But I hope to see the midsummer one."

"They are really very beautiful," he said, "and well done —there's no mistake about that! But what's it all for?"

"I suppose just to try and introduce amongst the craftsmen and the peasants the love of religious drama and folklore. And the students here can be engaged by other towns and places to direct and organize mediæval plays or pageants."

"That's all very well," he said. "In the Middle Ages the drama was the recognized medium of education and instruction because the people couldn't read; they had the churches painted with pictures to illustrate the Bible for them, so that they could read it in pictures; they had mystery and morality plays for the same purpose. But what's the use of these things to-day?"

"You prefer the cinema?" she said.

"Good cinemas are very good things," he said, "just as bad ones are very bad. You can give a poor man a trip from the Cape to Cairo for sixpence."

They were standing beside the black table.

"Of course," she said, "this table is King Arthur's Round Table. It's beautifully made, by a local craftsman. Look, the centre lifts out, and it can expand and expand. . . ."

He interrupted her. "Until it embraces the whole world!"

"That's the idea, I suppose." She paused for a moment. "Do you know," she said, after a little thought, "I just hate laughing at anything belonging to the Hostel—it's really so quaint and charming, and they are so beautifully in earnest, and so much nicer than most other people!"

"I know they are," he said. "And there's so much real

talent and brains amongst them, that it makes me annoyed that it isn't diverted into some more fruitful channel."

"Perhaps it's of more good than we understand? It certainly is in keeping with the atmosphere of the Valley, and I believe that it has a refining influence on all the people who are connected with it. You see lots of the people in the town take part in all the festivals and dramatic representations."

"Oh, yes, I know!" he said. "My father's dispenser is awfully keen about it all."

"It's a sort of English Oberammergau."

Quite unconsciously they had settled themselves on two of the seats in the chapel. Their conversation drifted quickly from one subject to another. It was not until the lady warden appeared that Evangeline realized how long they had been talking.

With her splendid vitality and magnetism, the lady warden caught them up in a whirlwind of information and discussion as to the plans for the summer festival, but before Allan Fairclough could ask her to definitely explain the meaning of the "ban-fire" which was to be gathered by the villagers, and burned on the hillside, some of the residents of the Hostel trooped into the chapel.

With a cordial good-night, Evangeline and her companion separated themselves from the party. Allan Fairclough was to return to his home in the town, and Evangeline had to rejoin her mother for the night; it was quite bed-time.

"They are going to sing their evening hymn, I think," Evangeline said. "I suppose it's just like any other hymn, and probably they believe in just what you and I believe in, but I never feel quite certain. I suppose it's God made manifold in the sun and the moon and the stars whom they worship, but I never feel quite clear about it all. I don't know what they feel about Christ, for the cross represents unity. As I don't want to be drawn into the religious part of the life here, I always manage to evade anything like these services."

Allan Fairclough looked at her understandingly. "I'm so glad you aren't quite one of them!" he said.

"Oh, but why?" she said, humbly. "Don't imagine that I think myself superior! It's just that I can't—I wish I could."

"But why?" he said.

"Because the people here are so happy, so engrossed, so ready to live! They never ask themselves if life's worth living, or what it's all for!"

"And do you?" he said; his eyes expressed surprise.

"Oh, yes! very often! Some days living seems so foolish, so needless, and the Hand that guides so ruthless! I see all the shearing down, the casting aside, the blotting out, until I often think it's hardly worth struggling at all, for whatever we do individually, the world will go on just the same."

"I'm sure these days with you are in the minority—we all have them. Who knows but what the lady warden drowns a great deal in mediævalism?"

"That's just why I envy her! She couldn't drown herself in it if the whole thing wasn't very real to her. With me it never could be real, so I never could drown anything in it."

When they parted Allan Fairclough asked the girl if he might take her to the site of the lake village. Mrs. Sarsfield had met them at the entrance to the reception hall, and he politely asked if she would go too.

Evangeline answered for her. "Why, mamma has never walked more than a mile at a time in her life! I'd have to carry her all the way, shouldn't I, mamma?"

"You may take Evangeline," Mrs. Sarsfield said. "I am only too glad to think that she has found a companion for her long walks, and one who knows the country. But I'm not so feeble as she infers. I think people often walk to places which are not nearly so pretty as the ones they started from—walking for walking's sake just tires one for nothing."

"You're not feeble, little mamma, only the one thing your feet don't seem to have been made for is walking. They're quite good in every other respect. I often wonder how mamma got along when she was young!"

"We rode so much in my young days," she said. "You forget, Evangeline, that riding was almost necessary."

"And now you have got an amazon of a daughter who loves to carry you about!" She laughed tenderly, as she put her arms round her mother's shoulders. "I'm waiting for you to say good-night." She turned her eyes to Allan. "When mamma is safely in bed, I begin to read. It's hopeless trying to read

while we are together—we just interrupt each other all the time! We could talk all day and all night, I believe."

Allan Fairclough said good-night. "I will call for you to-morrow," he said, "at three o'clock."

"And I'll take a tea-basket," Evangeline said, "and we can have a picnic. It's a real English tea-basket."

"And I'll take some cakes and cigarettes."

"And do you mind if I bring my sketch-book?"

"There will be nothing to sketch!"

"Nothing at all? Can't I fake a 'lake dwelling' just to surprise them at Grand Pré?"

"There will be nothing but brown cows knee-deep in white daisies and yellow buttercups! It's awfully flat—it was once a lake, remember. You'll see the cows being milked in the meadows, dozens and dozens of them!"

"I can see that at Grand Pré. You must manage something else."

"That's all I can promise! Good-night!"

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The lake-village was the first of the many excursions and walks which Evangeline took with Allan Fairclough.

She was introduced to his father, with whom her mother soon became pleasantly intimate. It amused Evangeline to see her dainty mother coquetting with the antiquarian doctor, who towered over her in height, and who in breadth would have made three of her. He looked what he was—a robust country gentleman, and a doctor of the old school. With all his love of fossils and his devotion to the chalk quarries of Street and their buried treasures, he had a very pretty appreciation of what is dainty and attractive in a woman. It pleased him to have a pretty little lady, who belonged to the refined type of gentlewomen amongst whom his boyhood had been spent, seated by his side in his study. Fine ammonites looked finer in her hands, while the perfume of her presence made him feel strangely young and eager.

He also admired, in a different way, the tall girl, with the dark head, who would swing into his study and claim her mamma when she returned from an evening's excursion with his son, but she did not appeal to his senses in the way her silent little mother did.

The coming of the mother and daughter to Avalon had made a delightful interlude in his life, which up till now had never struck him as being monotonous or the least narrow. When the little woman, who was learning to take a genuine, if silent, interest in his hobby, spoke of her eventual return to Grand Pré, the Doctor felt a sudden and overwhelming consciousness of the lack of feminine sympathy which so far his life had given him. His wife had died when his son was still a child, and since her death a working housekeeper had been the only woman in his home. His manservant and a boy made up his domestic staff.

When the Doctor saw how things were drifting with his ambitious son and the blue-eyed girl, he wondered to himself what was going to happen. He guessed enough about the financial affairs of both mother and daughter to feel pretty sure that Evangeline would have no dowry. Was Allan, he wondered, going to "chuck" ambition for romance? Was he allowing the girl to think that he meant marrying her if she would have him?

The girl was hard to read. He wondered if Allan understood her. She appeared to like him and enjoy his society, and she was conscious of his admiration; there was no doubt of that. Allan's feelings might still be platonic, although he did not really believe that any young man ever cared to give up the greater part of his holidays for the companionship of a girl for whom his feelings were platonic. A youth does not rise early and sit up late, so as to be able to spend one or two more hours in the company of a girl for whom his feelings are platonic.

By the time the buttercups had shrunk, and the white hawthorns were touched with brown, and the gold of the laburnums lay scattered on the smoothly-mown lawns, which bestowed a sense of care and respect for the Abbey ruins, Evangeline and Allan Fairclough were playing at the old, old game, of pretending not to be in love. It was a sort of hide-and-seek with each other's feelings. The girl's beauty had deepened, as it was bound to do, for there is no surer beautifier to womanhood than the excitement of a man's admiration and the birth of love. It illuminated Evangeline like the glow from a lamp. The Doctor, who had likened her eyes to a little rock-plant in his garden, which he called "Heavenly Blue," often called her by

that name. When two young people find all things interesting because they are looking at them together, there is much to be done in any locality.

Playing at the game of platonic affection made it possible for them still to take a real and intelligent interest in all they did and saw. So far a crisis had always been avoided. With declared lovers sight-seeing degenerates into perpetual love-making.

With man-like selfishness, Allan longed and tried to make Evangeline give him some definite proof of her affection. At the same time, he did not wish to put himself in the painful position of having anything like a scene, which there might be if he told her that he loved her, but that he did not wish to marry her, or even become engaged to her. What he wanted to do was to both eat his cake and yet keep it. He had all a selfish man's horror of scenes and of difficult situations.

He wanted her love, he wanted her confession of it, but he did not want her enough to give up his freedom for her, and to risk the ruin of his career.

A hundred times he had said to himself if only she had had a fortune, what a wife she would be! What a "ripping" time they could have had together! He almost considered himself a martyr because she had not wealth as well as beauty.

No one in Glastonbury knew how often they saw each other. If they had, tongues would have talked, and Allan did not wish that. So very often Evangeline and her mother met him at Wells or Sharpham, or at any other place they might have arranged for an excursion.

On these occasions Mrs. Sarsfield was only too glad to find some comfortable and beautiful spot where she could rest, while her daughter and Allan amused themselves by seeing all that the locality held in the way of picturesque or historical interest. Sometimes the Doctor, much to his son's amusement, found that it was convenient to visit a patient in the neighbourhood in which they were to take their tea. On these occasions the quartette was a delightful one, for Evangeline loved to see her mamma looking young again, under the sun of her Indian summer. The Doctor's liking for her companionship, gentle and sympathetic but totally unintellectual, was acting upon the mother much in the same way as the son's attentions were

acting upon her daughter. She was a woman again, and an individual. But so unconscious was she of her own pleasant flirtation that if Evangeline had even breathed a word of her on-looker's knowledge of the game, her mother would have shrunk back into her shell, and felt ashamed of what was really a thing to be proud.

CHAPTER III

WHAT feeling can be more invigorating for a woman who has said good-bye to youth than the sudden discovery that she is not too old to be loved and wanted by a man whom the world both esteems and admires? Is a young girl, in her first love, ever so conscious of her happiness? Is there any of the older woman's reverence and gratitude for life's supreme gift, in her passion?

The Indian summer of Evangeline's mother brought into blossom a delicate renaissance of her youth, the last blossoms in a sheltered garden. She had not the vaguest idea that the Doctor's attentions to herself were in any way foreign to his every-day existence. She did not know that his son was highly-amused and not a little surprised at his conduct, for his father was pre-eminently a scholar and an antiquarian.

A more unworldly creature than the Doctor it was scarcely possible to find, or a less vain woman than the little mother who seemed to him the embodiment of desirable femininity. He was glad that she was no longer young in years, although she was still young enough to be beautiful in his eyes.

But Allan's vacation was coming to an end. This was the last excursion which the quartette were to enjoy together. It had been to Shepton Mallet. On their return to Wells, from whence they were to take the train back to Glastonbury, at a point of the road about a quarter of a mile from the city they halted. The most perfect view lay spread before them. They had passed through a copse and had reached a stile, which had the magnetic quality for lovers possessed by all stiles.

Allan and Evangeline had walked from Shepton to Wells; their parents had driven. The stile seemed to be a point at which something definite must take place; it suggested that a psychological moment in the day's outing had arrived. It had not been one of such pure enjoyment as many others had been; a lack of conversation had soon become apparent, an

awkward feeling that as friends they had said all that they could say to each other until something which was being held back had been discussed.

Allan wished that he was safe at home and out of it. He did not know how long he could trust himself; his feelings had been stemmed up too long. Some wise voice kept on saying: "I won't kiss the girl. I won't say one word of rot to her. In an hour's time we shall be home, in two days I shall be back at work, pegging away like fun and feeling jolly glad that I haven't made an ass of myself!" Everything physical and human said: "Enjoy what you can when you can!"

And certainly the girl was inviting, a creature of intellect, passions, and picturesque beauty.

Resting on the stile, her blue eyes gazing down at the moat and green-encircled cathedral, Evangeline remained lost in thought; she scarcely saw the beauty of the scene, even while her senses embraced it.

A month ago she had met Allan for the first time; to-morrow he was going away. In a few months her mother and she would be back in Grand Pré; she would be looking over a valley which to her had once seemed full of romance and history. Now, even as she thought of it, how modern it all seemed, compared to the Valley of Avalon! How cold the sufferings of Evangeline compared to the pathos of Elaine and the passion of Sir Launcelot.

These abbeys and cathedrals of England had been built and destroyed and rebuilt centuries before anything like history had laid its glamour of romance on *her* valley. Her heart felt lonely at the idea of being back in the old familiar place, robbed of the old familiar sense of it. We cannot go back and pick up the threads which have been broken. Evangeline knew this; try as she might, the old Acadian charm of Grand Pré would never seem the same again.

When Allan had succeeded in lighting his cigarette—no easy matter on the windy hill—he came up to where Evangeline stood and, in spite of all that his reason urged, he slipped his arm through hers.

"This is our last evening together," he said, "and hasn't it been just perfect?"

Evangeline dropped her hooked arm so that his hand, al-

though it remained on her arm, was less intimately close. She was not proof against the magnetic current of youth's fevered pulses.

"It's been a glorious day," she said. "But I still prefer Glastonbury to Wells—it's more homely and romantic."

"I didn't mean only the sights we've seen," he said. "I meant our time together. You've been most awfully good to me, letting me have you to myself."

Evangeline's brows contracted; her eyes questioned. "Why?" she said. "It is you and your father who have been kind to my mamma and to myself. We were the strangers."

Something told the girl that he was anxious to say tender and nice things without committing himself or allowing himself to go too far. In spite of her feeling for him, she had long ago realized his selfishness and his desire for worldly prosperity. She felt that, young as he was, his heart was cautious; he could never really forget himself for any girl; mere love would never triumph. The more she realized it, the more she longed for his complete surrender. He liked her, but not so much as all the good things that money can bring into life, not so much as fame and notoriety. Her far-seeing sense of things argued for him. If he remained single, he could have many such pleasurable flirtations; if he lost his head and married, all of the soft sweet things of life would be condensed into the time of their engagement and a very brief period afterwards. Evangeline knew this; she saw the wisdom of his caution. And yet the old Eve was strong enough to urge her to complete her conquest. Her scorn for his lack of passion angered her. Love should be all-powerful.

The desire is inborn in every woman to experience the satisfaction that at least one man in her world is willing to give up anything to possess her. With the woman ought to lie the caution, with her the use of the bearing-rein.

"You've been awfully kind," he said, "in giving me such a good time. My holiday has just been perfect. If you hadn't been here, I'd have been horribly bored."

They were talking prettily and politely, quite absurdly so, considering youthful intimacy of a long month together!

"You have put up with a girl for your pal," she said, still

more lightly. "You've never made me feel that I am a mere woman—and a Colonial at that."

"A mere woman!" he said significantly. "The nicest part of it has been having you all to myself. It's spoilt me, though —I shall miss you horribly." His eyes told her that he could not enjoy the niceness much longer and keep his head.

"You've got your work." Her eyes were seeing into the distance, into far Grand Pré, where no work lay for her. "How selfish men can be!" she thought. "Cruelly selfish."

"Yes," he said, "I shall work. It's the only thing to do."

"And when, if ever, I come back to England," she said, "you will be a famous specialist in Harley Street. I'll have to pretend that I have some ear trouble and consult you."

"That's to say, if I can afford to be a specialist," he said. "But you've got to hold out for specializing—no sitting down to a smug little country practice like my father, or marrying at twenty-four, as he did. Dad's curiously sentimental, though you mightn't think so."

"I suppose not," she said. "But you can always marry money, and set up for yourself."

Her nerves were throbbing; Allan was only thinking of himself and the trials of his profession. She almost hated him, even while his eyes spoke a hundred bewildering things.

"Not so easily done! I couldn't bring myself to marry just for money, and if you do the other thing—marry where money is—it's generally rather hard to find." He looked at her, at her proud, disconsolate eyes. "Why do all the nicest girls and the pretty ones have no money?"

His manner was telling her all that his self-control held back. By some trick, unworthy of herself, she knew that she could break down that self-control, smash it to atoms.

"The law of compensation, I suppose. It would be hard if we had nothing." Her dark head went up. She was agonized with annoyance, wounded into defiance. This was his *apologia!* She swung round, with the intention of going. "We must be moving," she said casually.

Her mettle whipped his desire; her lean, supple activity roused the male competitive instinct. He was a match for her; his sex urged his physical mastership. His arm went quickly round her waist.

"Give me one kiss, Evangeline, just one for good luck! I want one so badly—you don't know how badly."

"Yes, I do—it's not so very badly!" she said, pushing him from her as she spoke.

"Yes," he said, "very, very badly." The girl's resistance had not helped his self-control. If she had assented, he would have felt afraid; that would have helped him, awakened his caution. Now that she was resisting, not so much by struggling as by the decision in her voice, he caught her in his arms and drew her to him.

He was young, and Evangeline carried with her the fragrance of youth, the perfection of supple limbs. In his arms, which lacked nothing of a lover's passion, he was conscious, even through her resistance, of the delicious response to his passion which would be his for a worthy asking. A gift to be won one day by some man luckier than himself.

When a man first kisses a woman and holds her in his arms, he is instantly aware of her possibilities and her limitations. Resistance because resistance must be made does not hide it. It is the inward fire. The response to passion, the unconscious give and take—these are beyond our will to control, beyond human subterfuge.

Allan for one moment lost his head while Evangeline's white throat felt for the first time the tenderness of a lover's kisses. If her ears did not enjoy the satisfaction and beauty of the immortal words, "I love you," her physical being needed no telling. For one moment her resentment was swept away. Soft lips were pressing on her throat; new sensations, exquisite and stupefying, were gaining their dominion over her senses. Her strength, of which she had been so pleasurably aware only a few moments ago, had changed to extreme lassitude. His arms crushed her, and she was lost in his strength. Its agony was delicious. Only of that was she keenly conscious.

As his lips left her throat and sought her mouth, some power of thought struggled for mastery in the girl's mind; she fought for self-control, for strength to resist.

"Don't!" she whispered. "Please don't! You are unjust, unfair!"

Allan was seized with a flood of remorse. He withdrew his arms quickly, determinedly.

In silence Evangeline steadied herself against the stile. He saw that a new beauty had transfigured her. She was exquisite; passion had crowned her.

"Forgive me," he said. "I know I had no right to—it was unjust."

Evangeline looked at him with eyes which showed him the pettiness of his own soul.

"Had you not?" she said. There had been hope in her heart. Her frank question said very plainly, "Love has surely given you the right, if that love is great enough, if it has triumphed."

"No," he said. "I had no right; I was unfair." He bent his head.

Evangeline saw that he was shaking, as if from a sudden chill. She allowed him a few moments to regain his self-control; it seemed like an hour.

"If you had no right," she said, "if you have been unfair, I think we had better go home."

"No," he said, "let us sit down. I want to tell you what a cur I am; I can make you hate me. It will be best."

Evangeline seated herself by his side on a bank on which daisies were going to sleep and yellow buttercups were closing their glossy petals. The moisture in the evening air was laden with the scent of hawthorn, which still, though touched with brown, covered the hedges. Birds, tired with the wonder of spring, were speeding to hidden homes.

"Are you married?" Evangeline said, with surprising suddenness. "Is that what you want to tell me?"

"Good God, no!" he said. "What made you think that?"

"You said that you wanted to tell me what a cur you were, that I should hate you."

"So I am a cur," he said. "I love you, and I've tried to make love to you. I think you do care for me, and I don't want to marry anyone; I don't mean to marry for many years yet. I want to be free."

Evangeline thought for a moment and then she said: "The girl of mamma's day would have told you that she didn't want to marry you, that she didn't love you, that you needn't distress yourself. I'm a girl of to-day, even if I am called Evangeline."

They both laughed, but the mirth was forced.

"I do love you—at least, I think I do, for if I hadn't, I should have slapped you when you kissed me." She tried to laugh. "It is what you deserved."

"Don't," he said, "don't. I hate myself. I know it!"

"Oh no, you don't!" she said. This time the girl really laughed. "You love yourself, you love yourself so much that you don't know what loving anyone else really means, and I doubt if you ever will."

Allan raised his head and looked at her. Her eyes were serious, but her attitude was tender. Her smile was more than he could bear. He caught hold of her hand.

"You're a brick!" he said. "And I do love you, just frightfully!"

She interrupted him. "After a manner," she said lightly. "But you musn't hold my hand. I love you in another manner, so that's not the game—at least, not with us, in Grand Pré. I want to keep cool, to be just to us both, if I can."

"Oh don't! Don't for Heaven's sake tell me that you love me!"

His words were a groan and extremely satisfying to the girl's pride. He had rolled over from his sitting position on the bank and lay with his face buried in the sleeping daisies and blue veronicas, his anguished body pressed close to the green bank. If he might not feel her tenderness in his arms, he must embrace the flower-decked world, he must press close to it to still the hunger of his arms. Evangeline remained silent.

"I do love you," he said, in a muffled way. "You don't know how much I love you. But girls never have the hateful question of a career to think about. If I could do just what I wanted to, what my love urges me to do, I should implore you to marry me. I should be the happiest man in the world if you said 'yes.' But what about ten years later? What of our future? I have seen such a lot of it."

He was resting on his elbows now, on the green bank, and looking up at Evangeline as he spoke of ruined careers, and of all that follows after.

"We should have children—they would require education. I couldn't specialize; I should have to become a partner with my father, or buy a small practice, and drudge along, like all

the other poor doctors of whom no one ever hears. And you'd hate it. It would be beastly. Even if you would risk it, it would be rottenly selfish of me to ask you. I know what it means in England—you don't."

While he was speaking Evangeline's heart was crying out, "I know what true love means! It never thinks of all that. We could just marry and struggle together and love together and be happy together and suffer together. Love doesn't calculate and weigh the cost of things, not true love, not the love of Launcelot for the Queen, not the love I want."

All this she knew, and yet she loved him dearly. His very faults only added a zest to her feelings for him. She loved his crisp bright hair, his clean athletic limbs. She longed to take his bowed head in her arms and kiss the back of his neck a hundred thousand times.

Of course her pride ought to have been hurt; of course she ought to have assumed a dignity and scorn. But she was human and loving and young, and before the man she loved she was unashamed.

"I think I could have been happy with you anywhere, and in quite poor circumstances," she said, "because I like rather simple things. The happiest couples I know are not the richest. But I am glad you told me all this, and I can see it from your point of view." She put her hand on his shoulder. "You've made me suffer, Allan—that can't be helped. I've been foolish, but I don't wish that it had all not happened."

A tremor ran through her body. Allan felt it. Her senses were again enjoying his caresses.

Allan sat upright. He saw her fingers glide tenderly over her throat; he knew that in her thoughts he was kissing her again, that her senses were responding. His head fell amongst the cushion of flowers.

"What I am losing!" he groaned. "Is it worth it? O God, is it worth it?"

Evangeline went on as if she had not heard him. "I shall suffer, Allan—things will never be the same again." She looked round. "In no other spring will the buttercups be so golden, the maythorn so sweet. But I shall get over it—you know how a woman gets over almost everything, except death. And when I have got over it, I suppose I shall marry

someone, for the same reasons as you will marry. And when I am mother's age, I shall talk about my first love-affair quite unemotionally, and say how wise you were and what a fool I was, and how it really was all the fault of romantic Glastonbury, dear King Arthur's Glastonbury."

Evangeline was looking into the valley below; it was touched by the setting sun.

"Don't grow hard," he said. "Don't let my beastliness hurt you! I should hate to think that I'd injured you, changed your ripping nature."

"No, *you* mustn't be allowed to think anything unpleasant," she said, half tenderly, half bitterly. "That would be uncomfortable, and that is just what the man I love doesn't like. He's afraid that things might prove uncomfortable and irksome when his wife was no longer fresh and young, and so on and so forth—isn't that it?" She sprang to her feet. "Come along," she said, "let us go home. Our little experience has taught us both some wisdom. The world isn't all made up of Sir Galahads and Sir Launcelots, and no one now really looks or cares for the Holy Grail. In England I think there is even less idealism than in Grand Pré; there, I do believe, there is still a sprinkling of people who are searching the whole world through for the sacred chalice, for the vision wonderful."

Allan rose to his feet more slowly.

"You are a brick," he said again, "and please don't go on thinking of what a cur I've been until you grow to hate me. I've tried not to lose my head."

"But why do you care?" she said. "What I think of you won't matter. Ten days from now you will have drowned your memory of me in the study of microbes and germs, you'll forget and be nicely comfortable again."

"I do care," he said. "I want you to love me always, and whenever you think of me to long for me—yes, long for me horribly! Oh, Evangeline, how difficult life is!"

The human truthfulness of his answer pleased her, in spite of its selfishness. If he had said that he wanted her to forget him and be happy with someone else, more worthy of her than he was, the sex in her would have been angered and insulted. Yet she turned her dark head away from him; her tear-blinded eyes were more than he deserved.

"In love a woman's part is to be generous," she said. "I shan't easily manage to forget you—you can rest assured of that. I shall be a different person before I love again. I shall have learned to see with other eyes."

"Evangeline!"

She swung round. "I'm not ashamed of loving you. You have had the spring-time of my love, all the freshness of its awakening. The man who gets my summer will not get what I could have given you. That is to be wasted."

She held out her hands. "Come, let us leave all this behind us—I mean, live it down. If you've taken the gayest colours out of my paint-box, there are still the subtle half-tones and softer tints left."

"I don't want anyone to have even those, or anything of you," he growled; his tones were full of envy.

"You would like to kill me right away if you could, so that no one should ever have me at all—isn't that it? You don't quite want me yourself, but you hate the idea of anyone else owning me! Oh, man, man, what a male thing you are!"

"Yes," he said, "I could bear it if I thought that no one else could have you—that's what drives half of mankind into matrimony."

"You would like to think of me languishing as an old maid, or dying of vapours like Early Victorian heroines, because I can't marry you! Well, I won't. The girls from Grand Pré don't do that sort of thing nowadays. But I believe that if I stayed long enough in Glastonbury I might fade away and die like the lily-maid of Astolat! It's a terribly romantic atmosphere—I expect it's really affected even you subconsciously." Allan heard a quality in her laugh which he knew that his behaviour had brought into it. "You really are the essence of English egotism," she said. "I wonder why I love you? Or am I only in love with love, because I am living in Glastonbury? I've been reading and thinking so much about these romantic knights, you see, that I'm just in a state to catch the fever badly. What a curious time it was! Every lady, married or unmarried, seemed to have her own particular knight, who devoted himself to her and was her lover. Her husband seemed to be proud of it. Love, love, love and romantic chivalry, rang through the world, didn't they? The Queen really was a very disreputable

person, and Sir Launcelot a treacherous friend, so moderns would think. But in those days Love seemed to triumph over everything, and the self same knights who were devoting their lives to searching for the Holy Grail were making love to their friends' wives and hosts' daughters all the time. Oh, but it was lovely, lovely!" she cried. "I think I could love like that, but where am I to find a Sir Launcelot?"

Every time Evangeline expressed or spoke of her love, with the prettiest frankness, it lashed Allan to scorn of himself. Her expression of her love was clearly and unmistakably passionate. Her eyes made a mock of her lightness of speech and tortured her cautious lover. What he was relinquishing goaded him beyond endurance. With chastity and dignity, she was holding out a brimming cup; her eyes spoke tenderly of the gift in her hands. It was to be loved and reverenced, reverenced because it was Love, and loved because it was the wine of her womanhood. She was as simple in her love as a primitive woman, in spite of her modernly trained mind. To Evangeline love was a thing as transparent and beautiful as a crystal bowl. Life had taught her the broad facts of evil, but to her sin had nothing whatever to do with the crystal bowl of love. Her virginal passions knew nothing of the mixed qualities of a man's love for a woman. In telling Allan of her love for him, she was speaking with a mind as innocent of all the forces that were working in her as a child is innocent of the vows his godfathers make for him at his baptism.

Her hands had been grasped again by his, but only for one moment. He dropped them as though her soft palms and youthful fingers caused him an unbearable agony.

"If things could only stay as they are!" he said. "If I could marry you and still go on working just the same, and you never get any older, and I could make a name and we could enjoy life in a charming way, a way worthy of you! Just you and me! But life isn't like that—oh, I've seen it tried!" he said angrily. "I've seen ripping girls marry brilliant young students just when they have been embarking on a career, and none of them have done anything worth speaking about. They have had to knuckle under and make a living somehow to keep the home and children. The ripping girls in a year or two look tired and ordinary. I've vowed a thousand times that I wouldn't

marry, both for the girl's sake and my own. It's a rotten business."

"You can't both eat your cake and keep it."

Evangeline spoke as if from an impersonal point of view. He knew, not by what she said, but by her manner, that now that he had told her quite frankly his opinions on matrimony, she would never consent to marry him, even if he implored her.

"I can't both eat it and keep it," he said, "I know that." His eyes devoured her. "But I needn't eat it up all in one bite."

"The bite is passion?"

"Yes," he said, "a delicious bite, but an unwise one for a poor doctor with brains and ambition and no capital."

"Then here endeth the first lesson," Evangeline said, with mock hilarity. "Men are so afraid of eating a delicious cake in case it will spoil their dinner; foolish women think a bite in the mouth is worth two in the larder. If I resist cake at tea-time, there's almost certain to be re-chauffed mutton at dinner, or something equally obnoxious."

"Damn!" he said, half aloud. "Don't be flippant!"

"If I am heartbroken, I don't mean to show it. The Chalice Well Hostel might forget 'The Glory of God in the Service of Life' if I did. I don't want to be their subject for a drama. We've been sentimental long enough. I hope the re-chauffed mutton will be worth a dozen strawberry-shortbread cakes at tea. I'm going home right away."

She crossed the stile with an ease and swiftness that drove everything from his mind except the pleasure which he derived from her beautiful limbs and her free stride.

"Come along," she said, "let's drown dull care in a good run. If thoughts are things, we'll clear the air by action."

Her last words were lost on Allan, who had his work well cut out in his determination to overtake her. Down the hill they ran side by side, leaving behind them the sleeping daisies and the bruised veronicas on the hillside. Their feet ripped through the long grass and the taller buttercups of the meadows as they sped along. Homing rooks were cawing over their heads; farm-ducks were waddling in long white lines to their night-quarters.

Still Evangeline ran, an Atalanta, with the freshness of youth

that had known the companionship of fleet-footed Indians in the far-off valley of Grand Pré.

By the time the station was reached their more prosaic surroundings prevented any return to unwise sentimentalizing over the scenery, or the Arthurian legends bound up in it. Evangeline, with a woman's swiftness of thought and adaptability, was now apparently in quite a different mood. She was charming and almost affectionate in her manner. Allan might really have been confiding in her his love for another woman. She talked naturally and interestedly about his work, and there was no hint, even in her eyes, that the subject was the rock upon which their frail bark had been wrecked.

Allan felt a curious resentment; he almost wondered if she had any real depth of feeling at all. He noticed that most of the men in the train looked at her with admiring eyes, and for so doing he could have thrown his stick at them. Evangeline was vital and glowing, and really far more beautiful than he had been aware of, until she was lost to him.

Her vitality, mingled with a certain languor when at ease, a characteristic quality of her beauty, made her a magnet for all eyes. Conflicting elements were deliciously mixed up in her. The women looked at her as well as the men.

Allan was resentful, infuriated. She was speaking confidently to a gipsy woman, who wore a string of red beads round her neck; her sunburnt brown hair was wrapped round her head in tight, heavy plaits. Evangeline knew how to win sympathy with her engaging smile; it was a smile peculiarly her own. She was trying it on the woman now, and it was having its effect. The gipsy was telling her what she wanted to know—where she lived and how Evangeline could reach her caravan. Evangeline always talked to everyone and anyone in tramcars or on a journey by train. Allan knew that, and yet he felt a furious jealousy of the woman and of everyone in the carriage who looked at her.

As he watched her, he saw that even already she was drifting away from him. She was reconstructing her mental outlook. He knew it. She was saying, "This is the beginning of new things, I have to start again."

Their eyes met. A subtle smile played over her curling lips, those soft lips that he would never kiss again.

He looked and felt glum, while she was full of courage. He was the lovesick boy; she was the brave young philosopher, who had accepted the disillusionment of her first fallen idol.

Evangeline was buying a kettle-holder from the gipsy, and some lace from her basket, which held buttons and tapes as well. All her interest seemed to be centred on its contents. The woman, with characteristic sympathy for youthful beauty and vitality, was responding to Evangeline's interest in her personal affairs.

Allan had to tell her that they had arrived at the station, that it was time to get out of the train. She had been very well aware that his ultra-English soul and conventional training had resented her intimacy with the gipsy.

At their parting she was very sweet, so sweet that he again almost lost his head. But there was a new pride in her attitude towards him, and just a little touch of pity. She had discovered the true value of the metal of which he was made.

"We shan't see each other again," she said, when he was turning away from the door of Chalice Well. "I am going to take mother over to the Quantocks for a week, so this must be our good-bye."

He knew what she meant. He had nothing to say.

"Look," she said, "I bought two kettle-holders—one for you and one for me, for our lonely bachelor homes. You will have to boil your own kettle and burn your fingers, so I have provided you with a nice thick holder. Now don't lose it." As she spoke, she pushed it into his pocket. "When you are using it and making your tea, think of Evangeline using hers. You see, being Evangeline, I can't very well help my foolish sentiment, can I?"

"Damn!" he said. "I wish you would be serious."

"Do you know you have said 'damn' very often this evening? Is that how you feel?"

"Yes, it is," he said, "just how I feel, and I don't believe you feel any way at all."

For answer Evangeline turned swiftly round and rang the bell. The door was opened almost instantly.

"Good-bye," she said, without turning her face towards him. "I wonder what worse things than 'damn' you would have said when you ate your re-chauffed mutton?"

"Good-night," he said. "Don't be so cruel! Girls have no hearts."

The door was almost closed; she had stepped inside it. She opened it just a very little, as if on an afterthought, and through the aperture she thrust her nose and mouth and two tender blue eyes.

Allan sprang forward and bent his head. Their lips met. In one long kiss Allan learnt that his heaven while he was on earth was in the woman whom he was renouncing.

Perhaps the very human desire for revenge had prompted Evangeline to let him know something of her sweetness, to leave with him for ever the memory of an exquisite pain.

Allan knew that no woman, unless she had love to give with it, could have kissed him as Evangeline had done.

He thrust the weight of his body against the door. It must open, he must again hold her in his arms, for she was all his—her lips had spoken it.

But Evangeline was born of Eve, a true woman, with a woman's knowledge of what a kiss can provoke. Her foot had been pressed against the door; with the first movement of Allan's body she thrust all her weight against it; like a flash her glowing face had been withdrawn. The temptress stood behind closed doors; the heavy bar was dropped in its socket.

Something in Allan, even while he cursed her, thanked God for the timely action. All else of him cried out with youthful hunger and fierceness for the girl who had saved him from herself.

CHAPTER IV

THE next afternoon, when Evangeline and her mother were seated under the north doorway arch of St. Mary's chapel in the Abbey ruins, an interesting conversation took place, which strangely affected the future of their lives. They had been leisurely studying the second recessed order of the arch, in which are representations of the Nativity, the visit of the Magi and the Flight into Egypt. The chapel of St. Mary is one of the most beautiful relics of mediæval architecture of the transitional stage. It is a very sacred spot, commemorating in its arrested decay a still older building, the original church, which was built of wood and wattle.

The beautiful north door fascinated Evangeline. Its gracious lines appealed to her more strongly than the sterner, purer examples of Norman architecture which she had seen at Winchester. She had sat for many hours during the bright spring days on the stone steps under the shelter of its arch.

This afternoon the ruins and the grounds which surround them looked more than usually beautiful. There were no visitors "doing" the Abbey, and the clear high sky was of a deep blue. The old gardener who kept the grounds in order was mowing the green lawns; the sound of his machine came graciously to their ears.

"Mamma, dearest, in all the world I don't think there could be anything more typically English than all this, do you?"

Evangeline's eyes were gazing upon the sunlit scene—the stately ruins, the green lawns, the heavy trees. Not a sound disturbed them but the even noise of the mower, which was scattering small white daisies and grass-like green chaff before it.

"No, dear, I think not."

There was a pause. Conversation between them had lacked much of its usual spontaneity. Both mother and daughter knew that something had to be explained and told before they could

meet mind to mind. Mrs. Sarsfield never hurried Evangeline, and it was from Evangeline that the something had to come. She had her own little wonders and half-acknowledged hopes in her heart, but they had nothing to do with Evangeline's mood. They must remain unacknowledged, even by herself.

"It is very English, Eve," she said again. She wanted to make her child speak. Evangeline had so many moods.

"Mamma, it is lovelier than ever to-day, but would you mind leaving it?"

"Leave it now? Do you mean go back to tea?" They had brought their tea-basket with them.

"No, no." Evangeline forced a laugh. Something told her that her mother had not thought that she had meant that. "Leave Glastonbury, I mean—go to London."

"To London, dear heart, in June?"

"I had a letter this morning from Mrs. Hemingway. . . ." She paused.

"Yes; what about her?"

Mrs. Hemingway was a young widow with whom they had crossed the Atlantic.

"She says that her boarding-house will be ready quite soon, and I think we could help her by going to it."

"By going now, Eve?" Mrs. Sarsfield's voice was lifeless as well as gentle. Her daughter heard the new note in it.

"Would you mind leaving Glastonbury so very much, mamma?"

"No, no, dear, of course not. Anything *you* like, will please me."

"Don't say that, mamma," Evangeline said quickly, "it makes me uncomfortable. But would you mind? I think we have exhausted the Chalice Well Hostel and the beauties of the locality, and discovered all there is to know about our Sarsfield ancestry. I feel like moving on."

"Then we will, dear heart. I am in Europe entirely for your sake, your pleasure. I came to Glastonbury at your suggestion."

"Mamma, am I spoilt?"

"No, dear, you are all I could wish for." She looked at the girl with loving eyes. "You are my world, Eve—for all these years you have filled it."

"Then I want to move on," Evangeline said. She stopped

abruptly. "Listen to that thrush cracking his snail-shells behind our very backs! Isn't his satisfaction deliciously enviable? I found a little ashpit of his rubbish this morning. Saucy fellow, cocking your eye at me! Where's your wife?"

Mrs. Sarsfield did not listen to the bird or look at it. She was wondering how much or how little she was to hear at that moment of Evangeline's reason for wishing to leave Glastonbury so suddenly, and of her feelings for Allan Fairclough. Her girl had to be handled very carefully; she had always to wait patiently for confidences.

As Evangeline now appeared lost in contemplation of the quickly-moving clouds overhead, Mrs. Sarsfield bravely shot an arrow from her bow.

"Eve," she said, "your desire to leave the hostel seems to fit in rather nicely with an invitation I had this morning."

Evangeline's bright eyes left their contemplation of the clouds; they were now gazing in astonishment at her mother. The transparent little woman generally confided the contents of all her letters to her daughter directly they were read, just as her girl's advice was consulted about her answers to them.

"Curiously enough," continued Mrs. Sarsfield, "I, too, had an invitation from one of our shipboard acquaintances. Mrs. McArthur has asked us to go and visit her. She has taken a beautiful old house in Wales—Wales is not so very far from here, is it?" Evangeline smiled at her mother's learning. "She wants to have a house-warming. She is inviting Mrs. Hemingway and some others." The words were poured out nervously; it had been rather a daring thing to withhold the news of this invitation from her child for all these hours.

Evangeline remained silent.

"Would you like to go, Eve? Is Llanelly very far from here?"

Evangeline rose from her seat. "Yes, little mamma, I should like to go." She stretched out her arms. "I think I should like to go, but you . . . ?" She looked down at her mother and searched her gentle face for her answer. "Why didn't you tell me before, mamma?"

There was a pause, but still Evangeline kept her eyes on the Dresden-china face of the tiny woman at her feet.

"Why, mamma? Tell me, why didn't you?" Evangeline

wondered if the doctor had had anything to do with her mother's holding back of the news.

"Because, dear heart . . . well, because I thought you were very happy here. I thought the invitation might spoil things. . . . I mean . . ." she hesitated nervously, ". . . I was going to tell you later on."

Evangeline stooped down and lifted her mother from the ground; she took her right into her young arms. When she was there, lying like a child, she hugged her vehemently.

"You thought there was something between Allan Fairclough and myself, didn't you? You thought you would wait until he had gone away, that when he had gone I should tell you that I had promised to marry him?" The words seemed to choke the girl; suddenly she stopped her gay talk and gazed into her mother's eyes. Finding her surmise right, she said, "Bless you, little mamma! Bless your dear thoughtfulness!"

"Yes, you're right. I hoped so, I do still hope so. And yet you want to leave Glastonbury? Is it because he's going away?"

Evangeline sat down again, under the door-lintel of St. Mary's Chapel, just where she had been sitting before their conversation started. Her mother was now on her lap. Evangeline's heart was throbbing; the little woman felt it. By such tokens did she know her daughter.

"Little mamma," Evangeline said, "I want to leave Glastonbury because that holiday flirtation is at an end." The tones of her voice made her mother cry out.

"Childee! Childee!" she said, as if her daughter was a baby again and in *her* lap.

"No, no, mamma—it's all right. Englishmen often flirt like that. We ought to have known it. Flirting and riding away is an English form of sport. No other nation rightly understands the meaning of the word flirt."

"He seemed so nice, so honourable! His father is devoted to him."

"I suppose he is—and all's fair in love and war, we are told, even if I'd been a sentimental fool and broken my heart over him."

Mrs. Sarsfield longed for a fuller explanation, but it was not to be. Evangeline was suffering cruelly. She knew that, but

whether from wounded pride or from love she could not find out. Evangeline, she knew, was as proud as she was romantic. She could never bring herself to speak of her wounded womanhood, even to her beloved armful. She hugged its softness silently and said with dignity:

"I will tell you lots more some day, mamma, but not now. Now I want to go away and forget. Allan and I have talked it all over; we understand each other. You might blame him if I told you all he said."

"You must judge, Evangeline. You have always managed your own affairs."

"And yours, beloved mamma? But am I going to cruelly mismanage yours now, by going away? Am I going to spoil things for you?"

Their eyes met. Evangeline read in the delicate shrinking of her mother's expression an imploring request that no allusion should be made to her friendship with the Doctor. Young love has all the world's sympathy, old love its laughter.

"I hope not," Evangeline said aloud, while in her heart she said, "Thank goodness father and son are poles apart! The dear Doctor is appallingly sentimental."

"I wish you could have cared for Bliss," her mother said, rather timidly. "He is so devoted, so constant."

"Now, mamma, that also is wiped off the slate, and I believe it is his constancy that's done it—women are such unreasonable things. When they get complete constancy it bores them, it becomes a yoke. They try to stretch it to breaking-point. When they haven't got it they grumble and make themselves miserable for the lack of it."

Mrs. Sarsfield, who was nothing if she was not feminine, said, "Don't you think, Eve, that it is our ambition and delight to make the inconstant constant? That is why good women so often marry really worthless and bad men—they want to be the woman for whose love that bad man will reform and remain constant."

"Dear mamma, what your femininity doesn't know about our foolishness and men's feelings for us isn't worth knowing! You never learnt it—it must have been born in you! It's like this, you see—when I am married, I want someone to look after me; I should have to look after Bliss for the rest of my life. To be

his ideal woman is delightful." She smiled. "To be his wife would be maddening."

"But he is so much loved at home; all his family adore him. How do you know it would be maddening to live with him?"

"That's just it—I don't know, I only think. And there is no way of finding out until you try. His family are so proud of him that I should want to shake him, bang him about, and wake him up. It would be a horrible failure, and you do want my marriage to be a permanency, don't you, mamma?" Evangeline spoke impersonally.

"Of course, Eve!" Her mother blushed. She always did blush furiously when Evangeline spoke like that; she never got used to it. She could never even peep at the subjects which her daughter stared straight in the face.

"That's why I'm not taking any risks. I am too happy with you to want to change a state of certainty for one of uncertainty and probable boredom. Is it wise of you to want me to, mamma?"

"But why need it be boredom? In Grand Pré you always found great pleasure in Bliss' society. There is no one, I am sure, with whom you have more in common, so far as I can see."

"Has 'having things in common' anything to do with love? Do you honestly think so, mamma?"

Mrs. Sarsfield looked guilty; her eyes dropped beneath the question in Evangeline's.

"If there are no Sir Launcelots or Sir Tristrams to be found in this Vale of Avalon, or in all England, I'm going to be practical and marry solid money, heaps and heaps of money. It's the only thing that's real. And love is the only thing it can't buy, I suppose, because it's unreal."

"Money can't buy health, Evangeline."

"It can make bad health better, mamma, and besides, I've an abundance of that precious commodity." She spoke mockingly. "I think I ought to fetch a good price in America, where money isn't scarce. In England, Colonials without dollars don't marry dukes, and millionaires are scarce. The U. S. A.'s the place to sell your soul."

"You want so much, Evangeline!"

"Much money, certainly! If I marry for money, it's going to be for lots and lots, enough to make it worth while. It's

going to weigh down my soul with a bang—no swinging of the scales for me."

"I didn't mean money. You are not really worldly, you are only talking to amuse yourself."

"I crossed a stile in life's journey yesterday, mamma. It was a very, very high one. I could scarcely get over it, but I did. The modern girl has no hoops, you see, and no Early Victorian modesty. I just picked up my skirts, vaulted it, and flew down the hill. I was a little breathless, certainly, at the bottom, but . . . but . . ." she paused and then went on ". . . I suppose there will be plenty more stiles and rivers to cross before I reach the Jordan. Probably the first is the most difficult."

"Then you would like me to accept Mrs. McArthur's invitation?" Mrs. Sarsfield was so well brought up that she knew how to accept her girl's confidences. They were to be received in silence.

Evangeline's feminine mind instantly reviewed her wardrobe. Was it sufficiently up-to-date for a country-house visit? Was her mother's?

Apparently they were, for she said unhesitatingly and gratefully, "I should love to go, mamma, if you don't mind."

"Then I'll write and accept. The letter can go by the last post."

"Let us meander for a bit," Evangeline said. "When has she asked us for?" She put her mother off her lap.

They picked up their tea-basket, with which they had finished, and linking arms, they entered St. Mary's Chapel—or, as it is more familiarly called, St. Joseph's Chapel.

Neither mother nor daughter spoke while they walked through the vast stretch of England's first Christian settlement, which holds in its beauty legends for the religious and passion for the romantic. Subconsciously their feet carried them from one point to another of the Abbey church and its various chapels.

When they reached King Arthur's reputed tomb, under the arch in a long wall, they stopped, and Evangeline took the bunch of English wild violets which she was wearing at her waist and laid it on the stone. She had first raised the flowers to her face and smelt them.

"Too pure," she said, "even for scent. They are Sir Galahad's flowers. The King should have sweet white briar."

"And Sir Launcelot," her mother asked, "what flowers are for him?"

"Oh, passion-flowers," she said, "and blood-red roses, and all the flowers that have love in their scents. Wild flowers are for children, and for the absolutely pure in heart. The scent of a flower is its love, mamma!—the quality of its passion. I imagine that is why the old monks generally illustrated their missals and Hours of the Virgin with small field flowers, sprinkled them with daisies and buttercups, flowers which speak of nothing stronger than the breath of spring, whose beauty is virginal."

They fell into silence again. Evangeline's modern, direct mind was facing facts and circumstances without blinking at them. She was saying to herself over and over again: "Allan doesn't know what love means. Or was it just that I haven't the power to make him feel it? Have I to accept that plain, unvarnished fact! His profession and career come before me and everything else. He could never, never have been a Sir Launcelot, risking all and forswearing all for his Queen."

Her mother, according to her upbringing and in keeping with her gentle nature, was drawing back and physically shying at the pictures which would construct themselves before her modest eyes, of her own farewell with the Doctor—his astonishment and—she blushed inwardly at the thought—his sorrow. To appear to Evangeline as though she had not been thinking about herself and her own feelings, or even about leaving Glastonbury, she hazarded a remark.

"Your Sir Launcelot, Eve, was not really a very nice or honourable knight. Personally, I think too much sentiment has been expended on the Queen, and too much has been forgiven Sir Launcelot. She was a false wife and a very bad example to her maids-in-waiting. She was very unfaithful to King Arthur."

Evangeline laughed wholeheartedly. "She certainly was all that, dearest, if Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote the truth, and a very bad example to her court." Evangeline laughed again. "Oh, but it was a glorious age! Chivalry was the only example

that mattered, and knight-erranting. As a lover, you must admit, mamma, that Sir Launcelot was adorable!"

"The lover of his Queen, Eve, who was the wife of his King, the King who had made him a knight, the man to whom he owed all his greatness of position?"

"I know, mamma. And not only that, but he had dedicated his life to the search for the Holy Grail the whole world over—for so we are told—which, I suppose, really meant trying to live a life pure enough in every way to be worthy of seeing the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, or whatever the sacred chalice contained. Through the purifying of the flesh the knights were to find the lost Sangreal—still, in spite of all that, Sir Launcelot was the Queen's lover, and when the King was absent he was ever beside her—Sir Launcelot is a perfect example of the mystic and the passionate lover rolled in one."

"Well, dear, that's what I say. It was not true romance, not true love." Mrs. Sarsfield spoke a little diffidently. She knew that she was not capable of arguing with Evangeline, and yet in her own way she had very strong views and knew what she meant. To her, Sir Launcelot's love was mere passion, but her modesty forbade her using the word.

"Oh, but it was love!" Evangeline cried. "And, after all, whose love is quite pure, as you express it? What would it be worth if it was? A thing fit for a child, a mere scentless wild flower. You might as well say that about the love of Paolo and Francesca."

"I don't know about their love, Evangeline," her mother spoke simply, "and until I came here all I knew about the love of Sir Launcelot for the Queen, or any of the Knights of King Arthur, I learnt from Tennyson's poems. He makes them so . . ."—she paused—". . . what shall I say?—so refined, so gentlemanly, one can't but admire them. Mallory and all these other old chroniclers whom you have been reading tell the stories quite differently. They seem to think that it was a very grand thing to be false to your King and love other men's wives, so long as you were physically brave and a bold lover."

"You are delicious, mamma. You allow nothing for the age of Mallory or King Arthur! You forget that, when King Arthur's Knights were searching the world over for the Holy Grail—the sacred dish which, one legend says, held the blood

of our Lord, and another, the wine which was drunk at the Last Supper, and which was invisible to all eyes but those of the pure in heart—and giving up their lives to this ideal, the rest of society was perfectly awful."

Womanlike, Evangeline was absolutely forgetful of her own condemnation of the Queen and Sir Launcelot to Allan only the night before. To defend them now suited her mood, her own disturbed passions.

"Sir Launcelot may to you seem treacherous and immoral, mamma, but he was the type of a constant, chivalrous lover and knight. All the world over, there isn't a woman living who wouldn't sell her soul for a Sir Launcelot."

"Oh, Evangeline!"

"Mamma, dearest!"

"How can you say so?"

"Because it's true. The women who think they would not, are not speaking the truth, or they have never met their Sir Launcelot. Virtue is merely a condition of temptation. If the conditions are favourable to virtue, we resist, and we are called virtuous; if they are unfavourable, we succumb. The lack of a Sir Launcelot is accountable for many so-called virtuous women and wives. Every woman longs or has longed to resist, or rather, to succumb to, a Sir Launcelot. But it is not the succumbing that would be difficult—it is the finding of a Sir Launcelot worth succumbing to. Sir Launcelots do not grow on blackberry trees, nor yet on the miraculous thorn of Glastonbury."

"Oh, Eve!"

"Oh, mamma!"

"I don't think you believe in these theories. I hope not!"

"One never knows what one believes in—certainly not the half of what one says. But if I could find a Sir Launcelot who would dedicate his life to me as Sir Launcelot did to the Queen, I have my doubts about my virtue—or any other woman's."

As Evangeline stopped speaking, they came abruptly face to face with the Doctor and Allan Fairclough. Evangeline saw that her words had reached their ears and, with her quick wits, righted the situation as best she could.

"Mamma and I have been having an argument about the right of Sir Launcelot to the admiration and sentiment which has been woven round his name. Mamma's ideal of him has

sadly fallen since she has read Mallory and the Chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Tennyson is so much more proper—more gentlemanly, as she calls it. I insist that according to the morals and ideals of the age, Sir Launcelot was a perfect lover and knight."

A gleam of humour lit up the Doctor's eyes. "He certainly was a brave lover—I agree with you. But I rather think the Queen was a jealous hussy. And as for the King! Well, mum's the word in Avalon, but he was a little bit too much of a St. Joseph for my taste!"

Evangeline's mother lost the meaning of his remark. Her daughter did not, and her spirit agreed with the doctor's views, even while she said, "But it was the accepted thing in those days. Every beautiful lady had a brave knight; she was allowed a husband and a lover, if the lover was absolutely faithful to her and to her alone. The King knew that this was the right of every beautiful woman, and as Sir Launcelot was the finest and the bravest knight of his age, it was fitting that he and none other should be the Queen's lover. Arthur was wise in his generation."

"As the devil's advocate, you are too able," the Doctor said. "I have not sufficient Arthurian knowledge to contest the case. What do you say, Allan?"

Evangeline had done no more than smile a callous, friendly smile to the young man.

"What do I think?" Allan spoke quickly, without looking at Evangeline. "Oh, I think that Sir Launcelot was a fool to prefer and stick to the jealous Queen, when the charming young Elaine was throwing herself into his arms. But, honestly, I think all this Arthurian 'cult' is beyond me." He turned to go. "So I will leave you now, dad—I've heaps of things to attend to."

Without more words and with a polite raising of his hat to Evangeline and her mother, he hurriedly left them. He looked distinctly embarrassed.

Evangeline resented his sudden appearance. Her farewell for ever had been the kiss which she had given him in a moment of passion, through the half-closed door of the hostel. She disliked seeing him again and speaking to him in this prosaic manner. It made the kiss seem unnecessary, almost vulgar.

The Doctor's words explained his own and his son's sudden appearance. Allan had received a letter which necessitated his leaving Glastonbury even earlier than he had expected—that very night, at ten o'clock. The Doctor was going to accompany him and remain one night in London, and therefore he would not be able to keep his promise to drive Evangeline's mother to Sharpham the next day. Evangeline and Allan had paid a visit to Sharpham, which, Evangeline had discovered, was the birthplace of Tom Jones. The Manor House of Sharpham Park, in the old days, belonged to Glastonbury Abbey.

When the Doctor had explained this, Evangeline impetuously strode on ahead, tea-basket in hand. She called back to her mother:

"Mamma, I am going to leave the basket at the hostel and climb the Tor—there ought to be a glorious view this evening."

Evangeline enjoyed playing up to her mother's little courtship. She did not stop to think how it was going to end, or how she wished it to end. The pretty romance of it was sufficient for the day. It was so delightful for her dear, gentle mamma to be a real woman again, to be enjoying the affectionate devotion of a big man, who was a very lovable mixture of a reserved scholar and frank schoolboy.

Evangeline, with long strides, soon left them far behind, for the Doctor had been showing her mother some interesting geological formation in a piece of limestone which he had turned over with his walking-stick; they had also stopped to examine the most lately-excavated portion of the ruins—the ash-heap which had probably been thrown out of the monks' kitchen, to judge by the oyster-shells and bones which had been turned up in it, and which were now lying exposed to the bright spring sunshine. Nothing is too humble for an excavator to examine; the kitchen ash-pit was proving a gold-mine.

The Doctor picked up an oyster-shell which shone with peculiar brilliancy and handed it to his companion.

She took it from him and smiled. "As a memento of the abbey," she said, "I will keep it—it is so bright and pretty."

"A very typical memento, probably. They did themselves well, those old monks. I sincerely hope that the good Abbot Whiting enjoyed many fine banquets in the hospitable abbey before he was drawn through the town to the Tor Hill upon a

hurdle and executed to please Sir Thomas Cromwell. Do you know that the Abbot's Kitchen was the inspiration of our old nursery rhyme, 'Little Jack Horner'?"

"The descendants of the Horner family, who still reside at Mells, resent the legend and deny that there is any foundation for its truth. They maintain that 'Little Jack Horner,' along with 'Old Mother Hubbard' and 'Jack and Jill,' appeared in a comic play written in Queen Elizabeth's time by a certain John Still, but this is the legend:

"An Abbot of Glastonbury, on being told that King Henry VIII. was angry with him for having built a kitchen such as he, the King, could not burn down, promptly sent his steward, Jack Horner, to the King with a present—a suitable bribe. It was a pie which contained the transfer deeds of twelve manors. Jack Horner lifted up the crust, abstracted from the dish the title-deed of the manor of Mells, and when he returned to Glastonbury he told the Abbott that the King had given it to him. The doctor sang the old words:

"'Little Jack Horner,
Sat in a corner,
Eyeing his Christmas pie.
He put in his thumb,
He pulled out a plum,
Saying, "What a brave boy am I!"'"

He took the oyster-shell from Mrs. Sarsfield's hand and wrote on its white surface the date and month of the year.

"A memento of Jack Horner," he said. "No doubt that shell held a *bon-bouche* for some jolly monk, if not for the wily Abbott himself."

His kind eyes gazed intently at the smiling lady. He had grown so accustomed to her silent responses that he looked for nothing more. She was prettier to-day than usual; her violet eyes, so like and yet unlike Evangeline's, were deeper in tone. There was a nervousness about her manner which he both felt and saw. He wondered what was the cause of it.

He suggested a slight detour in their return to the Hostel, but Mrs. Sarsfield declined.

"I have an important letter to write. I was just returning to the Hostel to write it when we met you. It ought to go to-night—I promised Evangeline."

"Can't it wait until the morning?" he said. "Women's letters are always so important, and really, dear lady, most of them answer themselves if you just let them alone."

A fitful smile played round Mrs. Sarsfield's features. It was rather a sad little smile, in spite of the pleasure which his insistence gave her.

"It is to accept an invitation," she said. "We are leaving Glastonbury almost immediately." The last words were spoken with a little gasp, as if she had dipped her head into cold water and withdrawn it. As her eyes met the Doctor's, they dropped instantly and a bright flush dyed her face. Mrs. Sarsfield's blushes always took years off her age.

The Doctor watched it—curiously, almost unkindly, considering his tender feelings for the lady, and her modesty.

As he said nothing, Mrs. Sarsfield went on, rather defensively, "Evangeline wants to go."

"And do you, Mary?"

Her name, spoken as she had only heard it spoken in the old, old days, when Evangeline's father was her lover, set every pulse in her body throbbing. If he had called her by some extravagant term of endearment she would have been less moved, have felt less bewilderment, have been less likely to accept the truth which his words were intended to convey. He was standing by her side, a very big man, looking down at her from what she always felt to be his splendid height. The gleaming oyster-shell was still in her hand. It seemed to her lover to hold less delicacy in its opal tints than the face of the woman whom he desired.

"Tell me, do you want to go, Mary? Do you want to say farewell to Glastonbury?"

The shy eyes were brave; they dared to look up into his; they must speak the words which her lips refused to say. And they spoke tenderly, for the Doctor came very close to her and took one of her hands in his own; his covered it completely. He possessed it.

"Why don't you stay, Mary?"

Mary let him hold her hand—indeed, he had it so firmly in both of his that she could not, without insistence, have withdrawn it.

She could find no breath for the words which must tell him

that Evangeline had decided to go to Wales. Try as she might, she could not steady her shaken senses, control her nerves. The suspense was a delicious agony. The pulses of the big man were leaping; he longed to feel the fluttering of the little wren in his arms, to feel her heartbeating against his own, to soothe her fears and be tender to her sweet modesty.

For weeks now he had subconsciously carried her about with him, in his daily rounds he had felt the closeness of her half-shrinking, half-delicately-yielding body beside him in his carriage. All through the bright days of spring she had been like a bundle of sweet flowers to his senses. But until now he had not questioned the future. The mother and daughter were apparently a fixture for some time to come at Glastonbury. It was beautiful, when the spring was in the year, to take the gift of each day. It was sufficient happiness to feel himself growing young again; her presence always assured him that his youth was not dead.

But now that his gentle lady, the little companion of his big armchair, was speaking of going away, was hinting at a parting, his desires became more definite, his wants more concrete.

"Mary," he said, "stay with me. Stay with me, and be my wife."

With the Doctor's arms enfolding her, Mary Sarsfield became a girl again. She rested her weight against her lover. She sighed. The Doctor felt her gift, her coming surrender.

"Will you stay, Mary?" he said. "Stay in the Vale of Avalon, and trust yourself to a big, rough fellow who adores you?"

Her slight figure pressed still more closely against him. Mary was demurely feminine.

"I will be very good to you, Mary, and as gentle as a big fellow can be." He turned up her blushing face to meet his own; he wished to see her love as well as to feel it.

"Yes, your eyes love me," he said, "though your shy lips hold back the secret. And now, my Mary, I want your lips."

"But . . . but . . . Evangeline!" she murmured. "There is Evangeline!"

Her laughing lover caught her face in his two hands and held it, held it until he had satisfied himself with her lips. Mary Sarsfield, it must be confessed, had in her quiet way a generous way of giving, a pretty idea of surrender.

When the Doctor raised his head from the upturned face, his happiness was the fresh happiness of a boy.

"You've made me feel quite young. What a witch you are, Mary!" He caught her to him again almost fiercely; then his arms slackened. "But I mustn't be rough with such a gentle little thing." He laughed. "I feel just as crazy as a boy!"

Mary's eyes showed her happiness. His vehemence, though he offered his apology for it, had not hurt her. Of his great strength and what he felt she was beautifully conscious.

"You aren't thinking any more about going away, Mary? You are going to stay? Tell me you will—let me hear you say it."

"But Evangeline . . . there is Evangeline."

"Oh, blow Evangeline!" the big man said laughingly. "There won't very long be any Evangeline for you. When she marries, where will you be, I should like to know, with no one to look after you?"

Mary laughed. It was a loving laugh, delicious to his ears. But she did not answer.

"I know women like Evangeline better than you do," he said. "In spite of her modern ways and independent manner, she has a very tender spot in her tall young person for romance and sentiment. If I go to her and say, 'Evangeline, I'm a silly old duffer, but I am madly in love with your mother and she is kind enough to love me, and says that she will marry me if you are agreeable, if you will let her,' what do you think she will say?"

Mary thought for a moment, not only of Evangeline's probable answer, but with satisfaction over his words. The spring air seemed warmed by them.

"You never can tell," she said, after a pause. "You really never can tell or judge of Evangeline."

"She may laugh at us up her sleeve," he said, "for two old fools—for to our children we are, of course, quite old, Mary; that is only natural. But if I'm not very much mistaken, your young Amazon will give us her blessing and be very charming and nice about it. Your daughter has a great appreciation of happiness," he said, thoughtfully. "She is a Hedonist in her own way, although she is ignorant of the fact."

Evangeline's mother did not answer, for she was so little

aware of what Hedonism meant that she thought that he was speaking from a professional point of view, of some purely physical characteristic of Evangeline's.

"Love and happiness and beauty appeal to that young lady very strongly. We may be, perhaps, just a foolish, middle-aged pair in her eyes, but our happiness will touch her, appeal to her Hedonist instincts. Am I right in saying that we are amazingly happy, Mary? Say I am right."

Something of the daughter was stirred in the mother by his emotion, for, unexpectedly to the big man, she said, with a touch of Evangeline's passion:

"You have made me almost too happy! I don't deserve such love. I can't think why you want me—you are so learned, so clever!"

"My Mary," he said, "that is what love is. We both wonder why we should have been given the best that the world contains. Heaven knows why you should trust such charm and gentleness to a big, rough fellow like me!" He raised her hands in the gallant old fashion and reverently pressed them to his lips. "Mary is the most beautiful of all names," he said. "Nothing else would have suited you—you are just my idea of Mary."

"And I have always admired the name of David," she said softly.

"The sweet singer of Israel," the doctor spoke absently.

Mary Sarsfield saw his abstraction. She was well accustomed to such absences, when the big frame beside her was a mere empty hulk. These silences had drawn them unconsciously to a close understanding.

Presently he said, as though he had forced his mind back to the conversation which they had broken off, the subject of David.

"Well, I sincerely hope he *did* write the beautiful poems which have been attributed to him, and that he did *not* behave so disgustingly to his faithful Hittite Captain. I never could overlook that sin. It was quite villainous. A gentleman couldn't do it, a man of honour. He must, I'm afraid, have been an outsider, Mary."

Mary, with her new love fluttering in her pulses, was a little bewildered. She was not accustomed to speaking of Biblical personages in that way. The characters whom the writers of

the Bible intended us to admire she still obediently admired. David was a sacred character; Biblical privileges must be allowed to Biblical heroes. God no doubt meant David to gain the woman he loved by putting her husband, his trusted Captain, in the forefront of the battle.

To the scholar, one of Mary's attractions was her capacity for silence; it saved her from being a stupid woman. They left David's character alone and returned to more directly personal matters.

"I will go this evening," he said, laughing, "and ask your daughter for your hand in marriage. I will also beg her to accept me as her guardian, if not as her stepfather. It's a horrid name!"

"About our visit," Mrs. Sarsfield said, nervously, "I think we must go." A little blush deepened the perfect pinkness of her skin. The blush was for Evangeline, for her confession, for her relations with Allan. Did the Doctor know of what had happened?

"How long must you stay?" he asked. "Don't make it too long. Don't forget, Mary, that I am not Allan. I'm not twenty-two—I have no time to waste."

"Nor I, David. Do you know how old I am? I'm afraid you don't!" Her words seemed almost a forced confession; they expressed fear.

He took her face in his two firm hands.

"Ask a doctor how old these pink cheeks are, how old these sweet violet eyes are, how old these lips!" He bent his head devoutly and kissed them as he spoke. "They are as young as I want, beloved woman. They are every bit as young as the fairest youth in my eyes—far too young for me!"

"Oh, David!" His ardour and kisses had developed her courage; she was able to say "David" quite confidently now. "Oh, David, I must be older than you think. I am Evangeline's mother—you seem to forget that!"

"The devil you are!" he said, with a chuckle. "And I often think it must be the other way about. But as you are, I must ask her for your hand, I suppose."

"Evangeline nurses me like a doll or a child. I know it must look foolish to a big man like you."

The Doctor looked quickly round the grounds which sur-

round the Abbey. There was no one in sight. He bent down and lifted her up and held her in his arms. As a mother holds an infant to her breast, he held Mary Sarsfield, Evangeline's mother.

Her resistance was absurd, and while his face covered hers there was silence.

Trembling and panting, he set her on her feet again. His eyes were full of mischief.

"We won't tell Evangeline," he said, as he gazed into her shocked, smiling eyes. "She might be jealous. But we know—you and I—that she isn't the only one who is to have that privilege."

"David, you are just like a boy!"

"And you, Mary, what are you like? Shall I tell you what you are like, what to me you always are like? You are like all the delicate flowers that grow in old gardens—the lavender, the china-roses, the pink and blue and white forget-me-nots—they are your cheeks and eyes and teeth—and the little straight daisies, and the sweet shy violets, peeping from under their leaves, and—best of all to me—the tender ivy, clinging to tall walls. And besides all these, Mary, you are the gentle mother, virgin-hearted and pure of soul. That is the Mary, who loves me. That is who you are and what you are like, beloved woman."

Mary certainly resembled many of the things which he had suggested, though she little knew it. At the moment she only said:

"At my age, David? How can I?" She laughed delightedly. "It is only your eyes."

"My eyes!" he said sternly. "Now, what do you mean, my lady? My eyes are my fortune, and I doubt if you could beat me where fossils and women are concerned. You hurt my feelings very much when you depreciate my eyesight. Don't suggest any such thing to my patients, for heaven's sake!"

His mock annoyance was spoken as they were leaving the Abbey gardens. Mary had refused the invitation to linger. The letter had to be written to Mrs. McArthur. The visit was to be paid, if Evangeline was still in the same humour.

"And after the visit?" the Doctor said.

His eyes made her blush. "We will see," she said, nervously.

"We won't see," he said, "we will get married."

"But, Evangeline," she said again. "She wishes to travel, to see more of England, and go to Europe."

"And you wish to get married," he said, "and have a home and a big, rough husband who adores you. Now, don't deny the truth of it. And who's going to win—Evangeline or you?"

"I am her mother."

"And so you must give in in all things to the child who has brought you up so well!"

"If she objects, I think that I ought to consider her before my own happiness—I always have done so."

"Bless you, Mary, for saying that!" Her lover caught her hand in his. "'Your own happiness'—that's something to feed on, little woman! How is it possible that such a bit of a thing as you really are can make a big, hulking chap like myself feel as I do?"

He was saying good-bye at the parting of their ways.

"My prayers will be awfully full of you to-night, Mary. God bless you!"

"And you, David," she said. "I do thank God for you."

CHAPTER V

WHEN the Doctor met Evangeline coming down the Tor Hill she scarcely looked surprised. She had walked on ahead to give him his chance, as she had expressed it to herself. He had now met her to tell her what had transpired. She could see it in his face.

As she bore down on him his embarrassment made his mission still more obvious. He was not prepared for her remark, for he did not know that the sun of love had transfigured his open honest face.

"Have you made my mamma very happy, Doctor? Is that what has brought you up the hill to meet me?"

His eyes flashed with humour. "She has made me very happy," he said, taken aback by her sudden attack. "I have come to ask you if you will allow her to marry me, if you will give me your mother's hand in marriage, and," he bowed very low, "if you will accept me as your guardian?"

Evangeline swallowed the something which filled her throat. It was as unexpected as her question had been to the Doctor. Her one dear, earthly care and possession was being taken away from her! The big man in front of her wanted it. He had the sort of love for her mother which Allan had not had for herself. Her timid little mother had "bowled the big man over," turned his world upside-down, turned the scholarly fossil into a splendid lover! Her mother had done what she had failed to do! A dart of envy entered the girl's soul, but she held out her hands to the Doctor, who took them eagerly.

"I'm awfully jealous," she said, and the words were true, "but I'm so glad! Yes, you can marry mamma, but you must father me if you do."

"My dear, my dear," he said, "that's what I want to do."

Evangeline held up her face. Her curling lips were trembling and tears made her eyes more like her mother's. The man's simple nature responded to the girl's emotion.

"A daughter's kiss, Doctor, to seal the compact. I will try not to be too strict with mamma, or too much in the way, if you will spoil me a great, great deal, and not make mamma feel that she can do without me—I couldn't bear that!"

"Certainly I won't," he said, "until the time comes when you want to do without her."

His eyes questioned her. She understood their kindness and meaning.

She laughed. "There is no immediate prospect of that. You will have to do with me for a good bit. But I must honestly confess that your news has come as a pleasant relief—mamma's future is now assured, her welfare is not altogether in my hands."

"Then I have both your consent and approval? They were the only things which made your mother hesitate. She thought you might object, or dislike the idea, even if you gave your permission."

"But why?" Evangeline said. "Why object to the thing I've been so discreetly encouraging?"

"Oh, you have, have you, young lady?" The Doctor was delighted.

"Certainly, or you wouldn't be saying this to me now! Do you really think that if I hadn't wanted you for mamma's husband and my guardian, I'd have let her stay on at Glastonbury, have let her go out drives with you, and coquette with you in her demure, knowing little way?" Evangeline's eyes were tender and whimsical.

"So you saw how the wind blew?"

At his words Evangeline caught hold of his arm and ran him swiftly down the hill beside her. She would not let him stop. Her laughter was contagious.

"Why, of course I did! But if I had let mamma even suspect by the smallest breath of teasing, she'd have taken fright like a wild antelope in a wood. You would never have caught her."

The Doctor laughed. "She had an excellent chaperon. I have to thank you more than I guessed, I suppose?"

"You owe everything to me, Father David," she said. "I held your happiness in my hands."

"Did you indeed? Is that a fact?" The doctor doubted if Evangeline knew his Mary.

"Mother has one of the daintiest and most sensitive natures you can imagine. She thought that I was only thinking of my own enjoyment in Glastonbury. Sometimes her sensibilities won't bear the truth—do you know what I mean?" the girl smiled. "And yet here she is, getting two husbands, and anyone would think she'd run away if a man kissed her finger-tip! Isn't that so, Doc?" Evangeline's eyes were mocking.

"I admit that I had to proceed cautiously."

"Oh," Evangeline said, "I should have thought that you probably took the citadel by storm, or lassoed her when she ran away! Every woman likes being drawn back."

"I did, in a manner."

They laughed happily together. Evangeline was visualizing her mother's enjoyment of her devout lover's strength. She knew that she had a little woman's admiration for a big man. She felt a strange enjoyment at her mother's second courtship. It seemed to her such a tremendous piece of good luck, this second blooming.

Presently she said, quite abruptly, "Will your son not object? Will he take the news as well as I have done?" She looked at the Doctor quickly. "I have taken it well, Doc, haven't I? Aren't you awfully relieved?"

"You have," he said. "I don't see why Mary was so anxious."

"Oh, it's a case of *Mary?* How funny! But of course it is! Forgive me. It's only that she is my mamma, and it does seem strange. Mary and David. It sounds like the House of Jesse, doesn't it? Mamma was anxious, of course, because I have never let her imagine that I ever dreamed of such a thing, and mamma never seems to quite expect what I do or feel. I suppose some girls might object to a step-papa—I expect that was what it was. In mamma's day perhaps they did. But what about your son?"

"Oh, Allan. I haven't to consult Allan. We understand each other. He'd call me an old fool, I suppose, but I haven't to ask his permission. 'Mamma's day' indeed!" His eyes twinkled. "I suppose *you* do, too? But Allan has his own

idea of happiness, of what is the best thing life can give us. I wonder if he will ever regret his choice?"

Evangeline's eyes remained perfectly steadfast as she listened to him and answered him.

"If I ever get the chance, I'd like to try to make him, Doc," she said. "He's years older than you—years and years." She gave the arm which was linked in hers a friendly hug. "Mamma is a lucky woman. I am longing to hear what she has to say about your proposal."

He looked into the laughing eyes. "Make it easy for her, dear," he said. "Let her know that you have given your consent gladly."

"I've brought her up since I was a baby, sir. Surely you can trust me to deal mercifully with her in this trying situation?"

"I think I can, Heavenly Blue," he said. "But you are such a madcap."

"No, sirree"—she emphasized the Americanism—"only a simple girl from Acadie who came to the Vale of Avalon in search of romance, and . . ." She paused.

"And has she found it?"

"For her mamma, yes, a very pretty romance, but for herself—well, she is no queen to her Sir Launcelot, for, like Elaine, he has no need of her. But she will not die of love for him and float down the river Brue on a barge."

"My dear!" the Doctor said. "And this is a son of mine!"

"Ambition is Allan's Guinevere," the girl said. "His career is his Sangreal. We all have our different ideas of the things that matter." She swung round suddenly; her eyes were proud. "Dear Doc, not one word more of this now and for ever more! I wanted to make things plain between us to show you how much I need mamma and you,"—she gazed round at the beautiful view—"why I wanted to leave Glastonbury, for a little time." She added the words thoughtfully. "When we have paid our visit, I will busy myself about mamma's marriage. I shall have lots to see to." She laughed tenderly. "What fun it is! I suppose I ought to discuss settlements?" Her eyes had lost their melancholy; a glint of her fighting Sarsfield ancestry showed in their humour.

"I am ready to discuss anything you like," he said, with complete understanding of her mood and its need at the moment.

They had borne down with swinging strides upon the Chalice Hostel. At its door Evangeline stopped.

"What fun for the mediævalists," she said, "the famous antiquary of Glastonbury going to marry the little lady from Grand Pré, the timid little mother of the Colonial girl who leads her such a dance! She has caught the one eligible in the place! But mamma is a born coquette, isn't she, Doc? She can give me points and points in the wiles of womanhood and in the managing of men."

The big doctor laughed heartily. "You are a vixen," he said, "but I believe you're really glad, and that, in a manner, you are right."

"I'm more than glad, Doc—I'm delighted! You've relieved me of a great and growing anxiety, mamma's future." Her blue eyes made him wonder at the courage of his son. They pleaded as she said, "You will spoil me, won't you? And let mamma spoil me too! Remember that I hold your happiness in my hands."

"I can't understand the man who wouldn't spoil you," he said. "If you were as small and gentle as Mary," he laughed, "you'd be nearly as nice, though never as pretty."

The girl pushed him gently from her as she closed the door, and cried, "Good-night, and sweet dreams of Mary! But don't forget that she is my mamma!"

"You dear old thing," she said tenderly to herself, "you have got it very badly! Why, all Grand Pré knows that I have the Sarsfield handsomeness as well as the Brettingham beauty"—her mother was a Brettingham. "When I'm gentle and sentimental and searching the wide world over for a Sir Launcelot, I'm a Brettingham, I feel like soft muslins and lavender ribbons. All the rest of me is pure Sarsfield—I'm for the King! I'll teach you about 'Prince'!" She stuck out her arms. "When I look at the ruins of the Abbey, and all that Glastonbury suffered at the hands of the ruthless Reformers, the Sarsfield is strong in me. I can say with absolute sincerity, I'm for the King! I'm for the faith that raised these glorious monuments! What have the Protestants ever built?" She turned up her nose. "A faith which has inspired so little Art—what is it worth? Just what love is worth that never forgets wisdom and caution and all that robs it of the only things it's worth!"

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Evangeline entered the hostel, she found her mother sitting by her writing-table. Mrs. Sarsfield had posted her acceptance of the invitation from Mrs. McArthur.

She looked up shyly as Evangeline appeared. She was nervous of her own act of independence, of her own promise to the Doctor.

"Where have you been, Eve?" she said. "It is nearly dinner-time; you must make haste."

"With your sweetheart, mamma."

"Oh, Evangeline!"

"Well, isn't he? He says you are going to marry him." Evangeline was looking down upon her mother, who could not see her eyes. The girl had put a mock severity into her voice. She felt her mother shrink a little, as though she was afraid that her daughter, because of her youth, would laugh at her new happiness. Evangeline turned her mother's face up to hers and held it in her two hands.

"Beloved little mamma," she said, "I think it's the nicest thing that ever happened! He's the biggest, dearest infant that ever a woman loved! Come and sit on my lap and tell me all about it."

Evangeline lifted her mother up in her arms and sat herself down in a comfortable chair. Her mother cuddled up to her.

"Now," Evangeline said, "if I can't have a lover of my own, tell me all about yours,"—she kissed her mother's blushing face—"everything, mamma."

"There is so little to tell, dear heart, so surprisingly little."

"So little? *Multum in parvo,* I suppose—just a case of 'I love you. Will you marry me?' "

"Something like that," Mary Sarsfield blushed.

"And you said, 'Yes, David,' just like that, bang off, no nice thrilling leading up to it, no heavenly beating about the

bush? How dull of you, mamma! No holding back to fire his desires? Just 'Yes, David,' when he asked, 'Will you marry me, Mary?'" The girl laughed. "He did say 'Mary,' now, didn't he, mamma?"

"Yes, Eve. He likes my name. But . . ."—she paused—". . . but, dear Evangeline, I only said yes if it doesn't make you unhappy. He understands."

"Does he? You delicious mamma, as if I didn't know! He came up the Tor Hill to ask me for your hand. I gave it to him on condition that he took mine as well."

"Evangeline!"

"Yes, mamma, he has sworn to love me too, a very, very great deal, and he has promised that if you get too fond of him and neglect me, he will be horrid to you, flirt with some patient and make you fall back again upon your faithful but neglected child." She rose from her chair, and, holding her mother close to her heart, she danced round the big room with her in her arms. "There, you dear, dear, silly, sentimental, romantic, young mamma, your confession's made! Your *mauvais quart d'heure* is passed, and Evangeline is willing."

She tossed her mother down on her bed and made the spring mattress bound up and down. "If he stops me playing with you, mamma, I'll kill him. Tell him so, will you?"

Mrs. Sarsfield was laughing and crying at the same time.

"He will never interfere with your happiness, Eve. He's the dearest and kindest of men, I'm sure."

"But he might not think that it was dignified for me to toss his wife on the bed and shake her about like a rolly-polly pudding." Evangeline made the mattress bound still higher. "But if he makes my beloved mamma into a starched, proper Mrs. Fairclough, or changes her into a stone image of a living woman, or into one of his precious limestone ammonites, or any other extinct mollusc, he'll rouse the gallant Sarsfields' fighting-blood in his adopted daughter. Do you remember," she said gaily, "the first time he caught you sitting on my knee?"

Mrs. Sarsfield blushed. She was thinking of the Doctor's remark upon the subject.

"I believe he fell in love with you at that moment,"

Evangeline said. "I remember now how foolishly he prescribed for you and the way he looked at me! He hadn't got used to us by that time."

Mrs. Sarsfield blushed even more vividly. Evangeline lifted her off the bed and set her on her feet, as the Doctor had done in the grounds of the Abbey ruins.

"You darling mamma!" she said. "He did far more than merely say 'Will you marry me?' You know he did—your blushes tell it! You get like a pink peony when you think of it."

"I didn't say that he only said that, Evangeline."

"And *you* did far more than you said, little mamma. You can always be trusted to do that—that is your little way."

The bell rang for dinner. Evangeline had not changed. She dashed out of her mother's room into her own. It is in our own room that we are our true selves. While Evangeline dressed for dinner her eyes were filled with tears.

PART II

LIFE IN A FOREST CLEARING AND AT TREGARON MANOR

CHAPTER I

ALEX HEMINGWAY sat down to think. She knew that for at least half-an-hour her little son, Tony, was safe, because Bartholomew, the Red-foot Indian who brought her a small quantity of milk every morning, had taken the boy into the forest. The Indian was called Bartholomew because his parents had both died before he was christened, and his uncle, who adopted him, remembering the missionary's Biblical explanation of the name Bartholomew (son of one's own brother) bestowed it upon the scrap of humanity which was being received into the fold as a child of God at the Mission Chapel.

The silent Indian loved the bright-haired Tony, whose tongue was never still, with a strange devotion. Alex knew that while her son was with him he was perfectly safe and gloriously happy.

Alex was twenty-four, Tony was five years old. She had been little more than a child in her knowledge of the world when he was born, but the years since his wonderful advent had been so full of care and disillusionment that at twenty-four she looked a toil-worn woman, a woman who had forgotten her girlhood, forgotten what youth and its ideals meant. She had lost sight of her ideals in her lonely fight for the material necessities of existence.

Sometimes when she was playing with Tony, the anxieties and disillusionment of her married life would fall from her and she would be young again, the girl-mother in spirits and appearance. Nature asserts herself at odd moments. When, for instance, she was washing her husband's clothes, and the fine skin of her hands was blistered at the knuckles by the soda and the process of rubbing, laughter would bubble up in her, and all alone in the wooden hut in the meagre clearing in the big forest, she would laugh and sing, throwing fine scorn at the fates who had played her so sorry a trick.

On one such occasion, when she was making the cabin ring with her laughter, her good-looking husband idled into the kitchen. In his early days he had been in the 22nd Lancers. Finding it impossible to live on anything like his income, he had sold out, and with no talent for anything in the world but idling and enjoying life, had gone out to Canada to make his fortune. It did not take long to spend what little capital he had; he had managed that before he took over the hut and clearing from the widow of a man who had died very suddenly of summer dysentery. It afforded him a house over his head; beyond that he did not trouble himself.

"What's the joke?" he said. "Glad you find something to laugh at in this cursed place!"

Alex continued to laugh.

"Out with it!" he said. "It's a change from your usual silence."

Her eyes lost their gaiety. The selfish man apologised.

"Well, if you don't grouse, your eyes carry a reproach all day long, just as if I could help the damned luck that's followed me everywhere! But don't let me stop your laughter —I'll clear out."

"Don't go, Larry. I didn't mean to hurt you; I was only laughing at the difference between grim reality and imagination. When I married you I fancied that life was going to be an idyll in the Limberlost. I had been reading Gene Stratton Porter. I was a fool, but she was greatly to blame. You and I were to be a sort of Paul and Virginia, living in the woods on nothing but love and moths and butterflies. I never thought about who was going to wash our clothes or cook the inevitable bacon and beans."

Larry kicked a wooden chair across the room. "Paul and Virginia didn't wear many clothes."

"That was it, I suppose. I didn't know that living in a log hut in the forest in Canada, with primitive Nature right up to your very door, meant pretty much the same to a woman as living in a log hut anywhere else, when she has all the cooking and washing and cleaning to do, besides looking after a child who finds some ingenious way of killing himself every half-hour." She sighed good-naturedly. "I suppose it might be even worse at Clapham in a thick fog."

"I'm sorry, old girl, that everything has turned out so differently from what I expected." He put his arm round his wife's thin body and looked into her eyes. "You do look a bit too fine," he said. "Take it easier. You keep things so awfully nice—it's too much for you. Let things slide a bit. I shan't mind—I shan't notice it."

His wife smiled. Larry had said these same things so often before. They had meant just so much, that while he was watching her toiling like a hardworked servant or charwoman, he felt sorry, really sorry. But it did not mean enough to make him even chop the wood for her, or do anything to lighten her day's toil. It was not a man's job.

* * * * * *

But to-day was not washing-day. She was grave and thoughtful. Bigger things were in the air. Her husband had been away on one of his "big-game expeditions" for more than two months. On these lengthy shooting expeditions he spent more money than they could afford and enjoyed himself immensely. He made a pretence that they were undertaken for purely practical purposes, that he was endangering his life to secure valuable skins, for which there was a very good market at the Hudson Bay Store attached to the Mission School. All that Alex knew about the matter was that each time he went on a shooting expedition, a great deal of money went with him, and that none ever came back. Nothing more was ever heard about the sale of the skins.

The capital upon which they were now living was Alex's. It was almost all gone, he had taken the last of it away with him on this expedition. He had been away for two whole months and she had not had a line from him. A hundred times over she said to herself: "If Larry had been wealthy, we should have been very happy; he would have been a charming husband. But unfortunately we are poor."

The fault lay with herself. She ought not to have married him. Nature had never meant him for a humdrum husband and father. He was of no use as either, though, to do him justice, he did not know it. Brought up by a snobbish mother, he had been pampered and admired from his infancy upwards.

Eagerly and callously he had left his wife and child all alone in the little forest hut. When he went off on a shoot-

ing expedition, Alex scarcely regretted his going. It was the difficult Tony who made her existence possible. He was the beginning and end of it.

She sat down by the kitchen table to think things out; she realized that a crisis in her life had come, she visualized the small figure of her son running by the side of the tall Bartholomew as he stalked along through the silent forest in his skin trousers, fringed down the outer sides, his feet encased in moccasins; she could see the sunlight playing on the soft rose-tinted trunks of the spruce firs, which made shadowy glades for nymphs and the gay god Pan to play in. Her happy-hearted son was chattering as he trotted by the side of his long-legged companion. Tony would always run until he was quite breathless and tired out, rather than allow Bartholomew to shorten his strides for his sake.

Alex's weary eyes shone with pride as she pictured the little figure, which was dearer to her than life itself, dear enough to make it all worth while.

There was profound silence in the hut, the silence of a world whose only sounds come from Nature, and Nature at that moment was drugged with the heat of a noonday sun.

Alex looked up from the bare boards of her kitchen-table; her eyes had been vacantly gazing at the knots in the grain of its wood. As she raised them she said aloud:

"It is a case of my pearl necklace now, it has come into it at last!"

She thought again, her eyebrows drawn together, her expression serious.

"Father insured the necklace, I remember, for nineteen hundred pounds. I suppose that is much beyond its selling value, but it must be worth a thousand pounds at least. Surely I could furnish a good big roomy house for a thousand pounds, and keep enough over for at least two years' rent? A house in a nice, but unfashionable part of London—don't I know the localities!" She shivered. "I'm sure it's the thing to do, to do at once." She jumped up hastily from her chair and found a sheet of paper and a pencil and made a rough calculation on it. The figures added up satisfactorily, judging by her pleased expression.

"And now I've got to lose Larry—that's the first step."

Her laugh echoed through the cabin. "I can lose him just as satisfactorily as the neighbours lost the husband to whom they deliberately married the old maid in 'Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage-Patch.' He *is* lost, as far as that goes. He has lost himself. If I sell up everything here—and, after all, it's all my own, so why shouldn't I?—and use the last bit of my hoard which he doesn't know anything about, I have a right to go to London and start life all over again. My thousand pounds will be capital for my boarding-house."

A combatant look came into her eyes, for she was picturing the conventional rebukes which her more fortunately-circumstanced and happily-married women relatives and friends would throw at her.

"I don't care!" she cried. "I won't let the boy's life be ruined! I just won't let my son grow up to be a drifter. This country is full of indolent failures, of youths who have no idea of work or of a career. Tony shan't be one of them! He shan't suffer for my idiotic folly!" She laughed bitterly. "What a silly fool I was!"

She found her writing-materials and wrote a letter to an old school-friend. The subject of the letter had been simmering in her mind for many weeks—in fact, ever since her husband had announced that he was going on another hunting-expedition. It ran thus:

"Dearest Ducie,

"I know that you will be shocked to hear that I have lost my husband. I am selling off the hut and returning to London. Will you find me two quiet, inexpensive rooms—a bed and sitting-room—so that I can have somewhere to lay my boy's head when I arrive?

"I will tell you all my news when we meet. It was all very sudden.

"Yours, with love,

"ALEX."

She read the letter through. "There," she said grimly, "that's the first fib, and there'll be more to follow! And yet it isn't a fib, though it is as good as one. But it must be done. I'd tell a thousand and one lies of that sort for Tony. Some lies are well worth telling."

She thought for a few minutes. "It would all go, every shilling of it! We should have absolutely nothing soon!"

She rose from her seat and went to a looking-glass which hung from a nail on the wall.

Alex looked at her face in the glass, a tired, anxious face, with the glow of youth gone from it. Her eyes, which Nature had made more for tears than laughter, were still beautiful; her lips, which had been made for love, were stern and pale. As she looked at them, they seemed to her "unkissed, unkind."

"What a drudge!" she said. "Whatever will Ducie think?"

The cheap little glass, which had been bought at the one provision-store at the mission settlement, had shown her no more than her face. She had to jump up quite high to catch even a glimpse of her white throat.

"What a scraggy, dowdy drudge! Poor Larry!"

The thinness of her neck had horrified her. All the brilliant lights, as fitful as her own smiles, had gone from her hair; they had gone so gradually that she was unaware of the change in its colour. It was now lustreless and limp for want of sufficient nourishment.

"But what on earth does it matter?" she said. "As a woman my life's finished. From now on I am only to count as a mother and a breadwinner, a guardian of the life I brought into the world, with as little real thought about what I was doing as a cat when she has kittens. I must try to atone."

She read the letter which she had written, over again. A twinkle lit up her face; humour was her gift from the gods; it was never far from her. In her worst hours of stress it came boldly out of its lurking-place and fought for her as nothing else could have done. Humour is the best of comrades.

"I think I've put that quite neatly," she said, as her eyes scanned the letter which she held in her hand. She was picturing Ducie reading it in London in her respectable Kensington home.

"You will be shocked to hear that I have lost my husband." A light laugh followed the words. "How jolly funny! But so I have lost him; I have lost him for the last three years. I only had him for about . . . how long? Let me see . . ."—she paused—" . . . for about a year. I've lost him and I don't mean to find him." She rose from her seat.

"Now for the selling of this place, and the losing of myself and the boy!"

As she said the last words, her whole being changed, her face became beautiful. The words had let loose a dammed-up river of love, which soothed and warmed her in its beautiful waters. Both physically and spiritually she felt renewed. The love for which she craved came to her with ever-renewed strength at the very briefest thought of Tony. The love which she ought to have bestowed upon her husband she gave to Tony, together with her maternal love, which was his by Nature. Alex was endowed with an immense capacity for love; Tony was her only outlet.

Pictures flashed through her brain of a successful development of the enterprise. She meant to launch out on a wonderful undertaking, full of daring and courage. It was to take the form of a boarding-house in London, run for girl-students and poor ladies only. Her charges were to be exceptionally moderate. At first she was going to content herself with a margin of profit, just enough to clear expenses and give herself and her boy a home.

With the optimism of her nature, she saw her business expanding and growing until she had become a well-off general manageress of a large and paying concern. She could see herself able to pick and choose from amongst the hosts of people who came to ask her to give them rooms. Already Tony was in his naval uniform, following in the footsteps of her father and her grandfather. She could see him in his middy's dress, his gold hair shining as brightly as his buttons.

Larry was forgotten—Larry, the ardent lover of her girlhood, with whom she had imagined she was going to spend an idyllic life in the Limberlost of Canada. He had proved a failure, a complete and absolute failure. She did not like to think of how great a failure, because he was Tony's father. In her mind she had said good-bye to him and to all her past dreams. She had been thinking over this plan for the past two months. It was all perfected in her brain. Now was the time for action. Larry would, she was sure, never really miss her. His vanity would be hurt to think that she could give him up without one word of complaint or protest. From the very first month of her married life, she had realized that if

their home was to be a peaceful one, she must appear to be subservient to his will. To keep him amiable—a very charming amiability while it lasted—she must give in in all things, smile at all things, and create an atmosphere of cheerfulness. There was to be no give-and-take which is the sum total of domestic bliss. If Alex tried to make him look at things seriously, he assumed the air of a martyr; she was spoiling his life. When things went wrong it was her fault, and even though he lived on her money he let her wear her fingers to the bone and gave her no help. The first time she blistered her fingers in washing his flannel shirts, he had taken the suffering hands in his and kissed them remorsefully. Larry had been a splendid lover.

But as the months passed into years and the scrubbing became heavier, for now there was the boy's washing added to their own, he forgot to gather her tired body into his arms and pet her. It was what Larry forgot to do rather than what he did that robbed Alex's days of their happiness. Her worn hands seemed only to show him how disappointingly she had worn, her high-bred type had quickly lost its *beauté du diable.*

When her wit made him laugh, he still admired and courted her. When anxiety and physical exhaustion robbed her of it, her presence annoyed him. Her lack of humour roused uncomfortable thoughts in his mind, thoughts which never troubled him when he was not actually face to face with the fact that Alex had done a very poor thing for herself when she married him.

Alex knew her man so well that she felt no compunction in selling off her home. Its four rough walls and the little clearing had seen her short life of passion and romance fade into years of drudgery and toil.

Her nearest neighbours were the Mission Fathers and one or two nuns who did saintly work amongst the Indians and the poor whites who were scattered about the lumber camps and small clearings in the virgin forest. She had not consulted the Fathers upon the step which she was about to take, for she knew that even though, as men, they might approve of it, as good Catholics and Fathers of the Church they must not condone it.

It had come to this point in her feeling for Larry, that some-

times she wished he was dead. It would be better if he died before he drifted further and further down the stream of humanity until he reached the level of some of the Englishmen whom she knew in Canada, who were constitutionally idle. Men wanting in the determination to succeed are of no use in a land where all but the strongest go to the wall. She had seen lots of them, well-born university men, earning or seeking a hand-to-mouth existence in small inns as waiters, or working as navvies on the railway-lines. Canada is cursed by such men and by its "remittance men" and their idle progeny.

That Larry might come to their pitiful level was not unlikely. But of one thing she was certain, that her boy was not going to be brought up as the sons of such men are brought up in Western Canada.

"Larry will never look for us," she said to herself, "because he doesn't know that I have the necklace. How soon I began to discover that I'd better go on keeping him in ignorance of the fact! It would pay for a good many more shooting expeditions, and buy some very pretty presents that I should never see!" She laughed. "How foolishly much I cared when I first found that receipted bill for a silver chain purse! How young I must have been! Now it's only the money spent on the silver bags that I mind, not 'the bits of fluff' who receive them. Poor Larry! I wonder if anything will ever wake him up to the reality of life, to his responsibility as a father." She held out her arms: "Whatever there is of a God or a Loving Father, do keep me fit and worthy to be Tony's mother! Dear God, keep close to us. Even if You don't approve, You'll understand. I do know that You'll understand, because somebody, somewhere, must understand the meaning and reason of all that seems to me sheer madness!" She dropped her arms. "I've quite forgotten how to pray," she said sadly. "The old prayers don't seem to bear on real life one bit, and my real life has made me rely so much on myself that I have almost forgotten the fact that there is a God Whom people ask to help them." She wiped her eyes. "Larry prays. I think he prays because he's afraid not to. It's because he prays that I don't. He's ensuring his own life for the future, though he won't insure it in this world for my benefit

or the boy's at his death. I wonder where such prayers go to, and what they will do for him?"

She heard her boy's voice at the door, and the next moment her son was in her arms.

"Tony," she said, "I've got a secret for you, a big, wonderful secret."

"Going to the Mission?" His eyes shone with excitement. "Going to buy some candies for Tony?"

"No, far farther than the Mission, Tony?"

"To China?"

"No, my darling, not to China." Alex laughed. Only the child could make her laugh ring like a girl's.

" 'Cos you always said that one day you'd go to China and look for all the spoons and forks the China boys tooked with them when they went to bury their uncles."

Alex laughed still more youthfully and hugged the excited child. She knew what he meant. In their first palmy days, when Larry was anxious about her health, they had had a succession of Chinese "boys" to help her.

"No, my son, not to China, but almost as far. But why do you think the secret must be a journey?"

" 'Cos my apricot stones said so. And, mummy, I dreamed last night that I was flying over the top of a big city, all full of churches and mission-houses and fur-stores and big, big lights. Bartholomew says that means that I am going on a long, long journey."

"Come, and I'll tell you," she said, "all about it. But you must first promise that if mummy takes you this wonderful journey on a big ship, and in a fast train, you will be a good, good son, and let her pack up all your things."

"My new snow-shoes, mummy?"

"Yes, I think so."

"And we'll take Bartholomew with us, mummy?"

"I'm afraid not, Tony. Bartholomew must stay here."

The boy's face fell. "Then we can't go."

"But, my son, why not? We will send Bartholomew a nice present from London."

"London town?" the boy cried. "Oh, mummy, London, the biggest wonderfullest city in the whole world!"

"Yes, my darling. Mother is going to leave this little hut and take you to London."

"For ever and ever and ever?"

"I think so."

Tony's face fell. "I won't go! I can never see Bartholomew any more! Won't he ever come to London, too?"

"I don't think so, dearest. This is his home."

"Why can't he, mummy?"

"Because he hasn't any money."

"What is money?"

"What you buy things with."

"Where does money grow, mummy? Can't we plant lots and lots of it? Bartholomew doesn't buy things, mummy. Oh, can't he come too? Do say yes, mummy!" Tony stroked her cheeks with his soft little hands and made pretty love to her.

"I can't, my dearest. I never tell stories to my precious son. If I said that he could come, it wouldn't be true."

"If he doesn't want any money, mummy, why can't he come without it?"

"But he would want money in London."

"Why would he?"

"Dearest, it's too difficult to explain. You must believe mummy. Bartholomew wouldn't be happy in London."

"But why, mummy, in the grandest and biggest place in the world, ever and ever so much bigger than the Mission? It's true, mummy—I saw'd pictures of London at the Mission School yesterday."

"Yes, my son, I know it is."

"Then why couldn't Bartholomew be happy?"

"Because there are no wild woods to hunt in, and no big lakes to fish in, and the sky isn't so blue there, or the sun so bright. And Bartholomew loves these things; he would get a bad cough and be very ill."

"Oh, mummy!" The boy's face fell.

"What is it, my son?"

"I don't want to go to London. I want to stay with Bartholomew. 'Sides, I said I would."

"What did you say to him?"

"I promised him that I'd stay with him always and always.

I'm to work for him when he's an old man. He's going to teach me how to trap and fish." Tony struggled to his feet.

Alex's arms felt empty. The Indian was more to the child than she was; her heart was desolate.

"Stand still, Tony, and listen while I tell you some of the things you will see on the journey. Put your hands at your sides and try to follow me. Try to listen and not jump about. First we shall go in a train for many days, through the great mountains and over the rivers, and by the side of big precipices. Then we shall go in a big, big steamer, bigger than you have ever seen, across the great lakes. After that we shall be in the train again, which will take us over the great flat prairie, where all the corn that makes your bread comes from. Then we shall see New York, with houses as high as the tall trees in the forest, and thousands and thousands of men and women walking about big, wide streets, with hundreds of shops full of toys, and we shall drive in motor-cars. Then we shall go in a still bigger steamer, which will take us across the Atlantic Ocean. There won't be any land for days and days. And then, after that we shall arrive in London."

"With no forest, mummy, and lakes and blue skies?" The child's imagination had taken flight, but he could not imagine a world with no forests and no blue skies; he could only visualize it as a black dismal place with no light to show him the way.

"There is the Zoo, Tony."

"What's that, mummy?"

"A place where there are all the wild animals which you have never seen, the big elephants and tigers and lions and crocodiles."

The child's eyes widened. "With no forests, mummy?"

Alex smiled. "No, no real forests. But they are quite happy."

The child looked doubtful. How could they be happy with no forest to live in?

"You could ride on an elephant and give him buns to eat out of your hand, and we could go to a circus. And at Christmas time, if you were good, I could take you to a pantomime—you know the story of 'The Babes in the Wood' and 'Dick Whittington'?"

"Yes, mummy."

"Well, at pantomimes you will see 'Little Red Riding Hood' and lots of fairies, and the most wonderful things, which mummy can't tell you about."

"Real fairies, mummy?"

"Beautiful fairies."

"And real Little Red Riding Hood?"

"A real Little Red Riding Hood."

"Then why does she live in London where there aren't any woods, mummy? Where do the Three Bears come from?"

"Ah, that's the secret!" Alex cried. Her boy's eyes were glowing; his imagination was on fire.

"Real fairies, like Bartholomew sees in the woods?"

"I expect so."

"Shall we see the King?"

"Yes, we shall see the King."

"And the Queen?"

"Yes, and the Queen."

"And their little boys?"

"Yes, and their little girl."

"And Alice in Wonderland and the little babies in the Tower, and . . . ?"

His mother nodded her head.

"And God, mummy?"

"Yes, darling."

"And Jesus?"

"I think so, I hope so."

"And the Virgin Mary and her Baby Boy? I do want to see her Baby, mummy! He's such a dear, wee, wee baby in the Mission Chapel."

"Yes, darling." Alex knew that her son was thinking over all the things which he had either seen or heard of in his short life. The Mission House and School were the Mecca of his existence.

"If London's the biggest and beautifullest city in the world, mummy, I guess the Virgin Mary's taken her little boy there, just like you are going to take me! Father Nicholas says that she's the loveliest and bestest mother God ever made—'course, he doesn't know you, mummy."

Alex took her child's words very seriously. Much of his

conversation often discomfited her, but she never confused his young brain by loading it with explanations which would only trouble it.

"If God and the Virgin Mary and her little Boy are all there, mummy, and you'll let me go and feed the elephants and see Little Red Riding Hood and all the stores, I'll go." He paused. "Will *you* tell Bartholomew, mummy? Say you will send him a present, a big present from London."

"Shall I send him another little boy, instead of Tony, to comfort him?"

"No!" the child cried. "No, mummy, not another little boy! Don't send him another little boy!"

"Well, I won't, darling, but you must tell him yourself."

The boy's face fell, but Alex was firm. The child's dislike of doing or saying anything unpleasant was a feature very markedly inherited from his father. She was anxious to stamp it out at the very beginning. On the few occasions when she had discovered that Tony had told a lie, she had realized that they had been told to save either her own or his father's feelings, not to shield himself or from cowardice.

"You must tell him that you are going home to the country of the Great White Queen, that you are going to live near the palace which she used to live in."

The child's eyes sparkled.

"Shall I see her ride through London, mummy, wearing a crown like the picture at the Mission School of Queen Elizabeth?"

"No, dearest, the Great White Queen is dead—her grandson is King now."

"Is he just a likle boy like me? I'm a grandson, aren't I?"

"Yes, but he is a big boy now, far older than Tony."

"Then how can he be a grandson and get picture-books like I get from granddad?"

"It's just a little difficult for you to understand, Tony, but wait until you get to London, and then you'll see. To-morrow you must tell Bartholomew that you are going to London, where the Great White Queen lived, and he'll understand. Poor Bartholomew doesn't know much about her grandson—he always likes to think that the Great White Queen could never die."

"What is die, mummy?"

"Why, Tony, you know what to be buried means? You have seen a funeral at the Mission."

"Yes, to go to heaven, and see God and Jesus and the Holy Mother."

"Yes, darling, that's to be dead, to die means the very same thing."

"Why doesn't Bartholomew want the Great White Queen to see God and the Holy Mother and her wee Baby Son, mummy?"

"Because he wants her to go on living and being our Queen, and not be taken away from us."

The child pondered. "But," he said, with troubled eyes, "how can she be far away if she is with God, for the Padre says God is never far away, God's always as close to us as anything? He tells us to say, 'Thou God, seest me.' That's why I'm brave when I'm in the dark, mummy. I 'spect the Great White Queen is near me, too, only the Padre says we shall all get other eyes when we go to heaven, and be able to see every single weeny tiny thing, just like Bartholomew does in the forest, only far, far better."

Alex rose from her seat. His short life in the little hut in the vast forest had limited his knowledge of life and human beings down to the narrowest. He had seen, perhaps, a dozen human beings in all, and five or six buildings which could with any truth be called buildings, apart from the Roman Catholic Mission School and the Chapel. The small Hudson Bay Store, where his mother contrived to get the simple necessaries for her household, was the only shop which he had ever seen. But the child of the woods and the winds and the sunshine had an imagination which supplied him with greater things than his lonely life had deprived him of. Gamage's held no such toys as his brain invented, and London as a city would be put severely to the test when it had to brave comparison with the city of his dreams.

While Tony's eyes were still seeing the fairness of the New Jerusalem which was London, with all the hosts of angels and the splendour of God, with His chariot and His horses flying through the clouds, and the Great White Queen enthroned beside the Blessed Virgin, Alex stooped down and kissed his golden hair.

"Now, little son, mummy's going to begin packing up. She's got lots and lots to do, so Tony must be as good as gold and as quiet as a mouse."

The child looked up at her; her words had not reached him.

Alex turned up his face with her two hands. "Does my precious son understand that if he wants to see London, he must be good and let mummy work?"

"I was seeing God, mummy, and the Holy Mother's wee Baby. She was just going to let me hold Him in my arms." His eyes expressed reproach. "Bartholomew often sees God."

"I'm sorry, my son, but if you are very quiet and good you will see it all again."

"But perhaps the wee Baby will be asleep and the Blessed Virgin won't let me wake Him. The new white baby at the Mission sleeps and sleeps and sleeps." A fresh idea stormed his brain. "Mummy," he cried, "why can't we have a little baby? Can we get one in London? I do want one for my birthday. I want it more than anything in all the world, more than the iron engine at the Stores. Say yes, mummy."

"Mummy can't promise, darling."

"But perhaps."

"London's so wonderful, Tony, that there is no saying what we may find there."

"Then promise, mummy, that if a baby doesn't cost too much, and Tony's a very, very good boy, you'll give him a baby in London?"

Alex kissed his eyes passionately. "You dear little son! If they were all like you, I'd like to have a hundred, however much they cost!"

"Then say you'll get me one, mummy, a London baby!"

"What if I loved the baby better than Tony?"

"But you couldn't." His words were a certainty.

"Why not?"

"'Cos I'm your loveliest and most darling son. You can't love two things best, the Padre says, so that's why I have to pretend to him that I love God better than you. I don't really, mummy, you needn't mind. And I told God why I said it. He doesn't mind—He's awfully understanding and likes boys."

"He seems to, darling. Then you won't be jealous of a new baby?"

"No, mummy, 'cos he'll be mine too. We'll get him together. I'll tell Bartholomew that you're going to London to see the Great White Queen and get a baby. It's quite easy to get a new baby in London."

Alex fled. Work had to be done, and many things thought out and arranged.

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This scene in a Canadian forest took place while Evangeline and her mother were preparing to leave Grand Pré. Fate had destined that Alex and Evangeline were to travel across the Atlantic on the same steamer.

CHAPTER II

In South Wales, within motoring distance of the massive Norman tower of St. David's cathedral and the romantic ruins of its Bishop's Palace, lies Tregaron Manor, a stately house, in spite of its mixed periods of architecture.

Tregaron hangs precipitously over a wild ravine. The river Tregaron rushes noisily through the ravine, whose steep and rocky sides completely hide its hurrying waters. Only a very high wind drowns its boom and roar.

In the course of its long life Tregaron has been partially destroyed, twice by fire and three times by architects. One of these latter-day vandals, confident of his own genius, actually pulled down incomparable Tudor work, to build a memorial of his own debased art. To do this particular barbarian justice, it must be admitted that, generally speaking, the inmates of the house—especially if they are fidgety about their health—prefer living in his ugly portion of it. The west wing fortunately is still purely Elizabethan, and it is the most beautiful as well as the most noble feature of the house. Two fourteenth-century stone hounds, high on their square columns, guard the entrance to a paved courtyard at the back of the house, which was originally the front. These picturesque creatures mark the oldest portion of the building, which contains a long banqueting-hall, and an ancient tower.

This oldest portion of the house is no longer used—no sunshine ever enters it. It is, however, carefully preserved. The fine coat-of-arms over a fourteenth-century doorway inside the courtyard tells of the days when the splendour and the beauty which graced Tregaron used to enter it by that door. To-day it looks down upon servants and tradespeople, upon the workers who make life luxurious for the modern occupants of the Manor.

But the glory and the incomparable romance of Tregaron, with its Celtic mixture of gaiety and sadness, lies primarily in its garden. It is very like the gardens in famous mediæval

pictures, where solemnity and gaiety walk hand-in-hand, where stern yew hedges afford arbours cut out of their depth for the lighter moments of crusading knights. Gardens where evergreen arches span sunlit paths. It is a garden long and steep, for it was made out of a portion of the black ravine. Its designer stole it from Nature's wildness, as the monks of old stole their gardens from dreary precipice wastes.

The garden of Tregaron Manor is terraced from the splendid height on which the house is built, down to the rushing river, whose passionate waters have pushed their way through crag and fen with the infinite persistence of Nature.

By the side of a sunny terrace-path flowers grew in such profusion that looking down upon the garden from a great height, it seems as though a stretch of Tudor tapestry, taken from the banqueting hall, had been spread over a clearing in the dark and closely-wooded glen.

There is nothing missing in Tregaron garden to complete a picture which words cannot paint. Dark arches throw their shadows on to the sunlit path, lend a touch of mystery to it, and bring into it that suggestion of sadness which is the self-created poetry of an ancient garden. There is nothing wanting but the romantic figures of the people of its romantic age. But alas both the garden and the house have mourned for many years the absence of the rightful owners of the estate. The garden has to be content with the admiration of aliens, and the house has to accustom itself to the ways of strangers.

There is an ancient dovecote at the far end of the first terrace, under its high wall. On this sunny afternoon white pigeons were masquerading as pompous humans along its yew-arched path. Their home is older than any portion of the house; and like many another dovecote, its age is lost in antiquity. It is one of those towers which are to be found scattered about Scotland and Wales, whose origin baffles architects. To the strutting pigeons, who alone peopled the garden, and whose low love-notes were seldom silent in the wild ravine, which runs to east and west of the gay garden as far as the eye could travel, the tower was erected for their sole use; their need was its origin.

When first the house was let to "new money," there was such a fluttering and flustering in the dovecote as had never been before; for they were very conservative, these pigeons of the old

tower, and they held to the manners and ways of the ancient regime; they resented the intrusion of people with new tones in their voices and new methods of distributing their worldly wealth. Wrong things done in the right way they were well accustomed to, for the owners of the Manor had never been blameless in their morals. The right things done in the wrong way they would not tolerate. They resented the irritating admiration of these enthusiastic people; who took nothing for granted; who exclaimed about every effect of Nature. And if they had only known it, at Tregaron Nature had been producing these same effects in the garden for centuries. If these newcomers had belonged to the place, or had belonged to any place at all, and were not quite new, they would have known this. Then why this persistent admiration? It annoyed the pigeons and made them fractious. They rudely ignored the handfuls of maize so persistently thrown to them; they kept to their own quarters; for the last few weeks they had scarcely even deigned to pick up the crumbs left on the ground after a tea-party had been held in the summer-house, which had been made out of the lower portion of their tower.

The household at Tregaron at the present moment consisted of a Mrs. McArthur, a pretty dark-eyed Southern American, and to whose voice the pigeons were scarcely fair. For Hebe McArthur had lived the greater part of her life in Washington, and she had a quality in her voice which was pleasing. It was "not a bit American," or so English people would tell you; but to those who knew, it was amusingly reminiscent of the fact that in her infancy a coloured nurse had first taught her to speak. The pigeons were probably confusing her with the American from New England who had lived in the house the summer before.

Mrs. McArthur was a widow. Her elderly husband had died a few years after their marriage, leaving her a vast fortune and a pleasant memory of his goodness and devotion to her. Hebe had been very fond of Abe McArthur. During her short married life she had been contented and happy with the man who had offered her his heart and his great wealth at a crisis in her life, when poverty and obscurity stared her in the face. Her father had died suddenly at a State ball in Washington. When his affairs were examined, it was found that he had left abso-

lutely nothing for the maintenance of his widow and daughter, both of whom had been brought up luxuriously.

Hebe had married her elderly lover, partly to give her mother a luxurious home, and partly because she was afraid of poverty and of the fight for existence which faced her. And loyally she had played the game. Generously she had given, if abundantly she had taken. There was no happier man than Abe McArthur during his short married life. He idolized and guarded very tenderly his southern beauty. She was the apple of his eye.

And now she was alone in the world, for her mother never recovered from the shock which she had received at her husband's death; she died a few months after Hebe's marriage.

Hebe McArthur was born with a happy temperament and a generous nature. Her expression showed it. Her gratitude to the fates who had been kind to her shone in her warm smile; it showed itself in her attitude towards life. Her love of amusement and pleasure was healthy and delightful. Very practically, too, she showed her gratitude to that dispensation which had in so kindly a manner lifted her high above the grind of poverty, which had placed her in a world where money can agreeably administer to the things of the flesh, where material wants find their satisfaction.

She was waiting now for the arrival of her guests. This was to be her first house-party in Tregaron Manor. The Mercedes car and the luggage motor had gone to the nearest station, which was fifteen miles away, to bring three of the party who were to arrive by the afternoon train. The trio consisted of Alex Hemingway, her son Tony, and a fellow-countryman of her own.

Hebe had crossed the Atlantic with Alex and her little boy. By the end of the voyage they had become good friends—or perhaps, to put it more accurately, they had enjoyed each other's society. Hebe's complacent nature was soothing to Alex Hemingway, who confided her business project to her, and Hebe, amazed at her courage, promised to help her by sending to her boarding house any friends whom she thought would be suitable and who wanted rooms in London. Alex was facing what she herself had lacked courage to face. But then Hebe had no Tony to make all things worth while.

There was an odd excitement for Alex in this visit to Tre-

garon Manor, an excitement which she kept to herself. It was a coincidence which would seem to others more like fiction than fact; yet it was a very real fact. She felt that she would get on well with Hebe McArthur, who knew something of her story —just as much as Alex had seen fit to tell her, that she had lost her husband very suddenly and that she was coming home to England for the boy's sake. Hebe had made her promise that when she, Hebe, had found and established herself in the kind of country-house which she had in her mind's eye, Alex and Tony would pay her a visit.

As Hebe visualized Tony, and how his beauty and high spirits would humanize the old house above her, and the garden stolen from the ravine, he seemed to her an ideal heir to such a property. It was a lonely place, which only wealth could make homely or keep in touch with civilization. It was so outlandish that very few people would care to live in it except in the summer; and yet, for a wealthy proprietor, it was ideal.

She sighed. The one thing which Abe's wealth could not buy was Tony.

In a green meadow, which had in its infancy been stolen from the garden, just as the garden had been stolen from the ravine, white ducks in a long straight row were waddling their way upwards from the river to the steep bank; they were coming for their evening meal. In the same smiling meadow at least fifty geese were busily eating up the sweet short grass. An air of great peace and plenty surrounded Hebe.

"What a rest and treat for poor Alex Hemingway all this will be!" she said. "I wonder if she has ever stayed in such a beautiful house before, if she has ever enjoyed such an air of British peace and plenty as there is here? How I shall enjoy feeding her up with good country food, and spoiling her for a bit—I'm sure she needs it."

A loud toot-tooting of a motor told her that the party from the station had reached the last portion of the mile-long avenue which bordered the deep ravine. Like the garden terrace below it, and which ran parallel with it, the avenue was spanned at intervals by thick yew arches.

Hebe McArthur's habitually indolent walk quickened. She hurried with small steps along the path; she could not hurry with the free, swinging strides of Evangeline, or of any girl

reared in the North; her pace was suggestive of the life she had led. Hebe was perhaps a trifle too stout for her years from an English point of view, so she panted a little when she reached the top of the old brick stair which led up from the garden, but only a very little. Her breathlessness was suggestive of an inward excitement rather than of physical exertion.

Her slender feet were the feet of a true daughter of the South; they had never been spoilt by rough walking, or by strong boots. Her movements were suggestively Southern, as was the sleeping fire which lay behind the pools of darkness in her eyes.

Her pattering feet reached the avenue and almost her own doorstep just as the big car drove up before it.

"Welcome to Tregaron!" she called out. "I'm ever so glad to see you." Her smile gave sincerity to her words.

Franklin Gibson sprang out of the car.

"How do you do, Mrs. McArthur! What a beautiful place you have got here!"

His American intonation was so slight that it would be doing him an injustice to suggest it, yet Franklin Gibson was, to look at and to listen to, a typical American, to those who know America.

Hebe shook his hand warmly. Then she gave her attention to Alex Hemingway and her boy.

For a moment Tony's childish kisses almost smothered her. "Mrs. Carthur," as he called her, was nearly as nice as the still longed-for and prayed-for Bartholomew.

While Tony hugged her she held out her hand to Alex; her big eyes gave her a beautiful welcome.

"Come right in," she said, "and have some tea. I'm sure you must all be real starving."

She noticed that Alex was very pale and silent, and that she looked even more worn and physically exhausted than she had done when they parted. Alex made no remark about the house or the romantic beauty of its situation, as Hebe had expected her to do. Franklin Gibson, however, made up for her lack of enthusiasm.

A bountiful tea was arranged on a round table in the big hall. They sat down to the table for the comfort of Tony, and because

tea at Tregaron Manor was always "a quite meal," as Hebe expressed it, for everyone was always hungry.

Tony began chattering volubly. He was making up for his mother's silence. He was, in his childish way, as delighted and impressed with his surroundings as Franklin Gibson. The spacious hall, the beautiful colouring of its ancient furniture and hangings, unconsciously appealed to the child's love of harmony.

Alex Hemingway sat on a high-backed Gothic chair, with her back to a large open fireplace, over whose mantelpiece hung a portrait of a lady by Peter Lely. It was a portrait of one of the bygone ladies of the Manor, one of the old regime of whom the pigeons so highly approved. Her gown was rich, and her hair was elaborately dressed; everything about her indicated breeding and a perfection of care bestowed upon her person. Alex, who sat directly underneath it, made a striking contrast—suggestive as she was of physical exhaustion, and need of personal care. She was perfectly neat and as carefully dressed as possible, but she was certainly not *bien soigné*. And yet, curiously enough, when she took off her unbecoming motor-hat at Hebe McArthur's request, and leaned her small head against the back of the old chair, Franklin Gibson found his eyes travelling backwards and forwards from the portrait of the silk-gowned lady, with the delicate Lely hands and the elaborately-dressed hair, to the tired woman—whose age he greatly exaggerated—was there a wayward resemblance between the portrait and the tired woman? Perhaps it was only the same distinction of good breeding, which neither poor dressing nor physical weariness could conceal in Alex. She was unmistakably "it," as Hebe expressed it to herself.

Franklin Gibson was looking at her with a collector's eyes. He had a passion for discovering badly-used beautiful objects and restoring them to their original state. He had a genius for recognizing the " real thing." He said to himself, as he watched Alex:

"She's the relic of a rare article. All this physical tiredness can be restored. Care and devotion would soon transform her. There's a distinctive charm about her, behind all this faded womanhood."

He looked again at the portrait. Alex felt his gaze. She

flushed. The picture of the luxurious lady embarrassed her. It made her conscious of the skimpiness of her gown; it brought to her mind the shop-girl's remark: "It *is* a little skimpy for you, madam, but what can you expect for forty-nine and six?"

Franklin Gibson noticed her uneasiness. He attributed it to his own lack of manners. He hastened to set her at her ease.

"I've seen a good deal of England and Wales," he said, "but I must admit that Mrs. McArthur has discovered the most romantic spot and the most ideal home I have ever been in. What do you think, Mrs. Hemingway? It's not too large to be a true home, and yet it's large enough to fire one's imagination. Have you ever seen anything just like it anywhere else?"

"No," Alex said. "I think it is unique." She turned to Hebe. "It looks beautiful this afternoon." Her eyes dropped before the deep gaze of the sympathetic Hebe. "Are you satisfied? Is it pleasant to live in? Is it all that you were looking for? Do you remember our talks on the boat?—your imaginary Castle of Indolence . . . the pictures we drew of it?"

"Why, I just adore it! I should like to buy it."

"You haven't bought it, Mrs. McArthur?" Franklin Gibson asked the question eagerly.

"No," Mrs. McArthur said, "it isn't for sale."

"Maybe not." He smiled.

"But it just isn't," Hebe said. "I've enquired."

"Many things aren't for sale, Mrs. McArthur, until you offer a fancy price." He looked round the big hall. "My! but it must be vexing to have to let a house like this! To allow any stranger who can pay the price sit under these old family-portraits, and enjoy the lights on that Spanish leather! The family must be very hard up."

"I know little or nothing about them," Hebe said. "I took it from the agent furnished for two years, with the option of a longer lease. I don't wonder the family can't afford to live in it or keep it up." She smiled. "It takes some keeping up. I put away a lot of the oldest furniture, some of the Jacobean chairs. I don't want to run any risks. They are very beautiful, but not comfortable, and I felt easier without them."

"Whom does the place belong to, any way? Who is that lady, do you know?" He pointed to the picture behind Alex.

"Her name was Caroline Pontifex. I believe it's a Lely."

Tony, who had been enjoying his cake far too much to talk, looked up as the word "Pontifex" caught his ear.

"Mummy has a story-book all about Gentle Jesus—it once belonged to a little girl called Caroline Pontifex, didn't it, mummy?"

Alex nodded in confirmation.

"Why, have you any connection with the family, Mrs. Hemingway?—anything to do with these Pontifexes?" Franklin Gibson's eyes were animated, his curiosity aroused.

"Oh, no, I have nothing to do with them," Alex said. "The Caroline Pontifex of my little book may have had—I forget how it came into my possession."

"Autocratic-looking woman!" he said. He gazed up at the picture. As his eyes fell on Alex, he said to himself, "This tired-looking woman, who travelled third-class all the way from London in a crowded train, isn't one whit less proud, or less well-born."

His eyes looked at his hostess. Her soft, womanly beauty was very attractive. Her eyes reminded him of the stars in the Southern heavens in his American home. But the very costliness of her modern clothes helped to distance her from the undefinable air of high-breeding which Peter Lely had infused into the portrait of the unknown Caroline Pontifex.

"There is something about English high-breeding," he said to himself, "which can't be imitated, and it's what we can't imitate that we Americans so hanker to possess."

He knew nothing of Alex Hemingway, or to whom she belonged. He had learnt very little from her while they drove from the station together. She had been frank and friendly, but far from communicative. She had only spoken to him when he spoke to her.

At the station he had introduced himself to her as a guest of Mrs. McArthur. They were to drive together to Tregaron Manor. Alex at first had tried to be polite and responsive, but her brain was too occupied with the problem of her visit and how it was to be carried off. Conversation had dwindled. The keen air had sent Tony to sleep. It was only when she was seated at the tea-table with her veil and motoring-hat off, and her beautiful boy by her side, that Franklin Gibson began to look upon her as a woman. He discovered suddenly that she

interested him. His mind began its reconstructing habit. He was "doing her up." She would respond to "treatment;" her tones and qualities would come out. He formed a picture of her after his work upon her, which meant comfort, ease, good food and lack of care, was completed. The picture was a very attractive one.

Conversation for the rest of the time which was spent over tea was taken up with Hebe's and Alex's reminiscences of the voyage across the Atlantic.

"The Sarsfields are coming to-morrow," Hebe said, "so we shall be a cheery party. I have been planning some excursions which ought to be delightful if the weather keeps like this. Do you know St. David's—the cathedral, I mean?"

"When I was quite a girl, I was in this part of the country for a time," Alex said, "but it was long ago, and yet I can remember St. David's cathedral pretty distinctly, and the ruins. I was at the time greatly impressed by actually seeing the tomb of St. David." She smiled. "Those were my convent days."

"The Sarsfields are coming on from Glastonbury," Hebe said. "I suppose they will be hard to please. Isn't Glastonbury the loveliest ruin you ever saw? I think it is."

"I have never seen it," Alex said.

"Never seen Glastonbury, and you an Englishwoman! Why, it's the cradle of Christianity in England, isn't it? And surely it lies just across the water from St. David's?" It was Franklin Gibson who spoke.

"You see, I was married and went out to Canada just after I left my convent school—I hadn't time to 'do' England."

Hebe remembered that Alex had never cared to speak of her husband; it seemed as if she could not. So out of compassion for her young widowhood, she never dwelt upon the subject. Her tact was not unnoticed by Alex.

"And you went straight out to Canada from your convent school?" Franklin Gibson said. He was ignorant of her late sorrow.

"Yes, after a fortnight in Paris." Alex smiled to herself. That fortnight had dissipated almost every farthing which her husband possessed, but it had been the most glorious two weeks of her life; it had been her one good time.

"You would like to come upstairs," Hebe said, "and see where I have arranged to put Tony. I hope he will approve."

"I should like to wash his sticky hands," Alex said, laughingly.

While they were at tea she had been asked to deliver up the key of her very modest luggage to a tall butler, who handed it over to a smart maid. The maid had unpacked her box and put her simple belongings into a huge chest of drawers and a capacious old wardrobe.

When they entered the bedroom, Hebe said, "Tony is not to sleep here. I hope you will agree with my arrangement—I have engaged a remarkably nice girl to look after him. She has been under-nursemaid in a very good family, and I know Tony isn't shy with strangers. He will be quite happy with her."

"Oh, but you shouldn't have done that!" Alex said. "I always do everything for him—he has never had a nurse."

"That's why I want you to have a complete rest while you are here." Hebe looked down at Tony, whose hand was tightly clasped in hers. "You will have such fun with Jenny, Tony—she's just full of games and romps and all the things that boys like."

Tony smiled. "Perhaps this is like heaven, mummy. It's the beautifullest place in all the world."

"I think it is heaven, with you in it," Hebe said, "for you're a perfect angel." She hugged Tony as she said to Alex, "My dear, what a possession!"

"I know," Alex said. "I am never without the joy of it."

"Well, come and see his rooms," Hebe said. "He's not in the Tudor wing. I thought *you* would like to be, but I always think the newer portion of old houses better for children."

"I think so too," Alex said, "but this is perfect." She looked out past the strong stone mullion of the window, at the trees of the black ravine, and up at the high hill on the other side, where the sunshine caught the colour of a red sandstone quarry, which had been cut out of the mountainside. The quarry warmed the landscape, for above its ridge, yellow-broom glittered in the sunlight like pure gold.

She turned abstractedly from the window and its wonderful view to follow her hostess. To Tony had been allocated a nursery, or rather play-room and a dining-room, and a bedroom

in the Victorian portion of the house, splendid rooms, admirably built, but totally lacking in the grace of proportion or dignity which appeals subconsciously to all lovers of architecture.

Hebe had provided every imaginable sort of toy and pleasure which a child could desire. It would take Tony weeks to exhaust their novelty. He was to be the king of an ideal child's kingdom.

He was so excited that Alex knew the exact nature of the reaction which would probably follow hard on his state of excessive joy.

When he ran to her side to demand her attention, to look at some new wonder, she lifted him up in her arms. As she did so, his eyes caught sight of a Medici coloured reproduction of Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia.*

Tony had not noticed the picture before. He had been too busily occupied with his wonderland of toys. As he looked at it, a pitiful smile crooked his childish lips. He struggled to keep back his tears. The next moment he was clinging to his mother in a passion of weeping, and Alex, nearly weeping herself, was holding him closely to her heart.

The Medici print was the picture in the Mission Chapel, which Tony loved beyond all others. It hung on an end-wall of the whitewashed schoolroom.

"The wee Baby Jesus," he sobbed, "the dear lickle Jesus! And we've never seen him. Oh, mummy," he wailed pitifully, "I want Bartholomew!" His sobs choked him. "I want the Padré and I want the Baby Jesus in the Chapel—I want to go home."

Tony sobbed and sobbed until Alex was weeping, and Hebe was half-distraught.

"I want Bartholomew, and the woods!" the child repeated over and over again. "Mummy, mummy, do take Tony back! Oh, I don't like England—England isn't true, mummy!" His sobs choked him. "Do, do, mummy!" he moaned. "Take Tony back, to the big lake and the black bears! Let Tony go back to Bartholomew—he's the nicest man in all the world 'cept Padre."

"My darling, my darling," Alex said, "you are going to be so happy here. Look at all these lovely toys Mrs. McArthur put in this big play-room for Tony!"

"I don't want them," he said.

"Oh, Tony, how unkind of you!"

"But I don't want them, mummy. Ask her to give them to the poor lickle boys in London who have no Bartholomew and no big lake and no forest full of fairies."

Alex met Hebe McArthur's smiling eyes. The child's honesty amused them.

"There is a forest here," Alex said. "If you will stop crying, I will take you to it—a dark forest, with red rowan trees in it, and a rushing river running at the bottom of its steep, steep sides. It's not a flat forest, like ours at home. It's very dangerous, and in the river there is a secret cavern, where a giant lives, who hurls big stones at anyone who dares to go too near his home. Tony will hear the big stones making a horrible noise. And there are dear little red squirrels up in the trees, not grey ones, like ours, and sometimes big eagles swoop over the forest and frighten the tiny birds."

"And are there any fruits, mummy? And maple sugar?"

"No, no maple-sugar, darling, but lots of wild strawberries and raspberries."

The child's eyes brightened. "And is there a Mission Chapel with the wee Child Jesus lying in His manger-bed, and are there any half-breed hunters in the forest?"

"Not in this forest, Tony, but in a town not very far away there is a beautiful chapel and a kind old Padre."

Tony was cheered, and his usual sweetness of expression asserted itself. His emotions were soothed. Mrs. McArthur looked at Alex with surprised eyes. She had not travelled across the Atlantic with Tony for nothing. It was Alex who had astonished her.

"How well you described the glen," she said, "and the Devil's Cauldron and all the features of the river! You might have lived here. How did you know about it? Or was it all guess-work?"

"I often heard of your famous glen and the Devil's Cauldron in the old days, when I was at St. David's. My father used to speak of it. But motors were not in common use in those days."

Mrs. McArthur did not notice the warmer tint which had suffused Alex's pale cheeks, or the nervous expression in her eyes.

"Besides," she went on, "I have to play up to Tony's imagi-

nation. His baby heart is aching for Canada, for its forests, and for their mystery. They have a strange charm. Bartholomew, our Indian help, so filled his head with forest folk-lore that the world of reality is always a disappointment to the child. In Canada he really lived in fairy-land." She paused, and then said, apologetically, "I think, if you will leave him alone with me for ten minutes—not more—he will be quite a different boy. He has been so awfully excited."

Mrs. McArthur wisely left the tired mother and the overstrung child to themselves and returned to her other guest.

"Tony," Alex said when they were alone, "mummy is awfully tired and not very well. Will you try to help her? She is wanting Tony's care—only Tony can be any good."

Tony looked at her solemnly. "Not foxing, mummy?"

"No, not foxing, Tony. Mummy wants to cry and cry and cry, just like Tony did, but she has to be brave and polite and show Mrs. McArthur how good and kind she thinks she has been, and how much she really loves her for her kindness."

"Yes, mummy."

"Will Tony try to be mummy's big man, as well as her dear, helpful little son? Tony is the only person who can really help mummy. If he is brave and good then mummy can be brave and good, too. If Tony screams and cries and is naughty, then mummy will be so ill that she will have to go to bed. Do you understand, little son? All this is quite true." Alex took his tiny hand and placed it on her own forehead. "The pain is there, Tony. It is very, very bad. And here, too." She moved his hand to her heart and held it there in silence, while she gazed into his serious eyes.

The child pulled himself together. He realized that his mother's words were true. "Mummy, dearest, I'll help you. I forgot." He slipped down on his knees and folded his hands. "I forgot to be good."

Alex was accustomed to her boy's impetuous, ardent prayers. They were as much a part of his childish life as his smiles and laughter. They were every bit as important to his nature, which demanded an emotional outlet. Tony prayed as he had been taught to pray at the Mission School. It was a pretty petition to the Blessed Virgin to help him to be a good boy and to give

him wisdom. It ended, with increased earnestness, in the same way as all his prayers ended:

"Ah! Vierge sainté, ecoutez, avec cette tendresse que vous est propre, j'implore votre assistance par votre Fils adorable."

When Mrs. McArthur returned, the child was as good as gold. He went to Jennie, who instantly fell in love with his beauty and winning manners. His air of unquestionable breeding appealed to the girl, who had conservative ideas. No surroundings, however humble, could have robbed Tony of his unbuyable inheritance.

When he was satisfactorily installed in his new quarters, Alex returned to her own bedroom.

She was tired, tired, tired. Her face and body expressed her exhaustion. The luxury and comfort of her surroundings, and the beauty of the view which she looked at, with almost unseeing eyes, from her window, instead of soothing her senses, filled her with a nervous emotion, in which pleasure and anguish were inseparably mingled.

She looked over the deep glen to the high hills at the other side; she looked right down at the soft old red-brick wall; she strained her eyes to catch a glimpse of the dovecote. She had to brush away the tears from her eyes before she could see the strutting pigeons promenading along the garden-paths.

"Tregaron Manor!" she said dreamily. "And I am here as a guest with Tony!" She stroked the grey stone of the mullion; her eyes searched again for the ancient tower. As she gazed at it, her hands fell in front of her; she clasped them tightly. "Mrs. McArthur would like to buy Tregaron, and so would that kind-eyed American, but the family won't sell it!" A bitter laugh broke the stillness. "Americans think dollars can buy everything. How rich Hebe is!" As she spoke, she visualized her own boarding-house in St. Michael's Square.

Then a vision of Hebe, in her perfectly-cut tailor-made suit and her real lace blouse floated before her eyes. She looked down at her own ready-made black serge coat and skirt, and plain linen blouse.

"My mourning for poor Larry!" she said. A smile lit up her face; there was a humour in the idea which only her own soul knew, and when humour came to Alex the situation was saved. "They miss something, after all, these millionaires," she

said. "Dear Hebe, with all her affluence and her kind heart, has only lived on the surface of life—Hebe, the cup-bearer to the gods, the daughter of Juno! I think her name suits her. Her eyes are more like twin lakes of dark water—wood-lakes—than ever, and her Southern indolence is more sensuous. Hebe is very soothing."

Alex washed her face and hands, and ran a comb through her hair. It was not glossy, like Hebe's, or expressive of much brushing and good care. Her eyes looked tired and her figure painfully thin, while Hebe was as rounded and as smooth in her femininity as one of the gleaming pigeons on the high red wall.

Alex opened a wardrobe—there were two in her bedroom—and looked into it to see where the maid had put her clothes. A gingham dress hung from one peg; it was pale mauve, with a narrow black and white ribbon for its belt. That was for dainty occasions, when the days were warm enough. On another peg hung her evening dress; it was of some soft black material. These two gowns and the one she stood in comprised her outer wardrobe.

Hebe's appearance had made her feel its meagreness, but to Alex these things were trifles. Her lack of pretty gowns was not going to spoil her visit. Tony's wardrobe was far better and ampler than her own; her maternal pride had seen to that.

This visit was to be a magnificent interlude in her strenuous life, a building up of worn-out nerve-tissue. She knew that after she had recovered from her tiredness, she would enjoy every hour of it. She was determined to do so.

When she came downstairs, she found Franklin Gibson and her hostess talking earnestly together. Suddenly the idea came to her that Hebe might have some feeling warmer than mere friendship for her fellow-countryman, who seemed to be on terms of intimacy with her, for Hebe looked a little embarrassed as she came into the hall.

"What would you like to do?" she said, as she turned to Alex. "Go out for a little turn in the garden, or stay here and rest? Please do just as you feel inclined. You are to feel perfectly free here to do what you like."

Alex turned longing eyes to a comfortable Chesterfield. Its cushioned seat looked as soft as a down pillow. She knew that

its length would take her long limbs, stretched out to their fullest. She was too tired to care about anything else.

"I should like to stay here," she said laughingly, "if I really may do what I want to do most."

"I think you are wise," Hebe said. "Lie down on the sofa and shut your eyes. I will take Mr. Gibson for a stroll in the garden—he is longing to explore it, and to see the house from the outside—the Tudor wing and the still older part at the back are worth inspecting."

"Every side of it," he said. "I want to study every portion of it." He turned to Alex. "You English people haven't the same passion for old buildings as we have. You can take them for granted; I can't, not yet—I don't expect I ever shall. Now, if I owned a place like this, I should always consider it a privilege to live in it, my thoughts would bow to it all day long. If I were dead-tired, I couldn't lie down in here and rest as you are going to do, no, I could not, not until I had got some of this . . . emotion, you may term it, off my chest."

"I'm not unappreciative," Alex said. "Please don't think so. And even though I am English, you must remember that I have lived in a Canadian forest for the last six years. This is a great contrast."

"I know that," he said, "but all the same, the age and the spirit of England are in your bones. Old stones and great buildings were known to you before the forest clearing. You were taken, you say, as a child, to see St. David's. We Americans, like the Moslems in their desire for Mecca, wait and wait with the longing in our hearts to go to these places while we are young."

Alex flung herself down on the soft-cushioned Chesterfield. Her abandonment was a sort of protest.

"I believe you are far more romantic than we are," she said, "but I wonder if you know what being bodily tired really means —so tired that nothing else matters?"

The American was emotional. As he looked at the slender woman, who seemed to be yearning to stretch herself out with still more abandonment on the comfortable sofa, something in his throat stopped him speaking. A physically tired woman hurt his ideals. With a deep bow he turned and left her.

"For pity's sake," he said to Hebe when they were out of hearing, "whoever has neglected that poor soul so terribly?"

Hebe shook her head. Alex's exhaustion had touched her kind heart.

"There is something glowing, all the same, about her, something that kindles and comes to life now and then. Do you notice what I mean? There is a strange fire in her soul." He paused, and then said: "What age do you suppose she is, anyhow?"

"She was married, vur-ry, vur-ry young"—Hebe gave the pretty Southern roll to her "very"—"and her boy is only five."

"Is he her first child?"

"Yes, I imagine so. Why not?"

"Whew! Is that so?" His American voice expressed sympathy. "She has had some trouble," he said. "Been up against a good deal, I fancy?"

"I think so," Hebe said, "but she is very reserved and very plucky—reserved, I mean, about what she means to hold back."

"I know," he said. "I understand. I can gather that. Her apparent candour is a little misleading just at first."

"She has only lately lost her husband. She can't bear to speak of him. I fancy he left her almost without a cent, but she's all pluck and spirit."

"What is she doing now? I mean, when she isn't here?"

"She is going to take boarders. She has settled on a house in London. Its drainage wanted seeing to, or she would be there now."

"Is that so?" he said. "She wasn't reared, I fancy, for that sort of life. But that's a bright boy of hers."

Hebe's eyes became reflective. She was thinking of the period in her own life when she had had to face the future—a future of almost greater poverty than Alex's. A great pity and longing to help her came to her. She herself had been saved from poverty by the love and generosity of a good, kind husband. If only Franklin Gibson would fall in love with Alex, how splendid it would be! As she pictured the tired, worn Alex, she sighed. Perhaps she was not the sort of woman that a very rich man would desire to marry? Besides, Evangeline was to arrive tomorrow, and Evangeline . . . ! Then she smiled, for she heard Franklin Gibson say:

"Doesn't the very sight of her make you long to help her, to bring her back to her original state? Don't you feel how very interesting it would be to see her gradually responding to your care and attention?"

Hebe laughed her full Southern laughter. "Why, my friend, you are thinking of her as you think of your latest art-treasure! You can almost imagine that you have found her at your wonderful Caledonian Market, or in some old shop in the King's Road, Chelsea. You want to 'do Alex Hemingway up' to restore her."

"I feel like that," he said. "I see something of the old master in her, something very fine." He paused. "To me she looks badly nourished. Don't she to you?"

"I am going to do the best I can for her," Hebe said. "I shall insist on breakfast in bed for the first week, and plenty of milk and beef-tea and every sort of feeding thing I can procure. I will make her take some nourishment every two hours."

"I'm sure you will," he said. His voice was sincere, but Hebe detected in it a twinge of regret.

"You wish you had the oiling and beeswaxing to do, don't you, sir-ree?"

They had reached the garden, when their conversation changed. The tired Alex was forgotten in the colour and romance of the ancient terraces and gay flowers.

Franklin Gibson was so delighted that he said more than once to his hostess: "I must thank you again for giving me this pleasure. I feel that it is a very great privilege to stay in such a charming home. It *is* a privilege, and I don't want to forget that."

Hebe threw a handful of maize to the pigeons; she always carried some in a silk bag which hung from her arm. The pigeons ignored it; turning tail, they ran along the path right in front of the two Americans.

"Over-fed," Franklin Gibson said. "Do you give them maize every time you pass them, Mrs. McArthur?"

"They are 'sassy' things," she said. "They sit on Andrew—the gardener's—head and shoulders while he works, and they take corn—my corn—out of his mouth. And yet when I try

to coax them, they behave like that—turn their little backs on me every time."

"Birds are odd things," he said. "As a rule I can do what I like with them. But then you have to be very quiet and patient; they may show annoyance, you mayn't. In my home in Maryland I get along with them first-rate. They seem to understand me and my ways."

"These sassy things," Hebe said, "always make me feel an interloper, a mere modern. I can't say just why."

"That tired girl," Franklin Gibson said, "is very English. She fits all right into a place like this, don't you think?"

Hebe laughed. "Better than I do, you mean?"

"Well," he said, "your natural background is a big old mansion of the Southern plantation style. You want the South. That girl wants these stern, tall pines in that dark wood; she wants the high hills and the wild passes. You want the *dolce-far-niente* of a warm land. Temperamentally you are Southern."

"I believe you are right," Hebe said. "I could do with a moonlight picnic under the golden stars at home, and the scent of orange-flowers at sundown. Sometimes I get vur-ry homesick. Do you, Mr. Gibson?"

"No," Franklin Gibson said, "I can't say I do. I never have time to feel lonely over here. Things keep crowding in on me, things to do and things to see. My! but this country, Mrs. McArthur, is crammed full of beautiful houses and castles and cathedrals. Every county in England has some special feature of its own. And yet very few English people go to see their local monuments. In Italy English people are much more interested in ancient things than they are at home. I've noticed that, and when they have any intelligence at all about such things, it generally goes deeper than ours."

"What all the world can see, no one ever looks at," Hebe said laughingly.

"I suppose that explains it. When the English are in Rome they feel that they may never be there again, and so they rush off and see every Roccoco church and Pope's fountain in the city."

Tony and his nurse were playing with the pigeons, which had gathered round the child as if he had grown up in their

midst. One was sitting on his shoulder and another was perched on his tiny wrist. Tony was in ecstasies.

"Now, look at that," Hebe said. "Did you ever? The sassy things! If I go near them, they will walk away—now see if they don't."

When they got near the child the pigeons ruffled their feathers and behaved as Hebe had said they would. They instantly left the child's wrist and shoulder and, turning their backs on the party, strutted up the path. Tony ran after them, laughing delightedly. He had forgotten his brief storm of forest-lust in the wonders of the garden. Jennie, his nurse, was an admirable companion.

"A chip of the old block!" Franklin Gibson said. "If that youngster was born in the Canadian forest, he is still a typical bit of England. Why, already he looks as if he had been born here, and as if he owned the whole place. There's that air about him that made Mark Twain say that Christ must have meant the English when He said 'The meek shall inherit the earth,' Witty, wasn't it? He *did* hit off the idiosyncrasies of the various nations—and so good naturedly."

Hebe laughed. "Oh, I think Mark Twain was delightful. I wish America would give us another like him, don't you?"

"He was a martyr to dyspepsia—did you know?—and yet he has made more people laugh than any other writer. That tired girl has humour," he said. "I expect it has helped her some."

"Mrs. Hemingway?" Hebe said. "Why, yes, she has plenty of humour when she isn't as tired as she is to-day."

"I wonder when that is?" he said pensively. "I wonder if she ever feels rested? Do you imagine she is asleep at this moment?"

"I will go and see," Hebe said, "before we go to the oldest part of the house. I can peep at her without disturbing her."

"Her boy is going to have a fine time here, just the time of his life."

Tony was still trying to catch the pigeons. His childish laughter rang through the garden. Something in Hebe suffered each time she heard it. Tony was all her soul hungered for. She had money enough to shower every blessing on him if he had been hers.

When she left Franklin Gibson to take her peep at Alex, the serious American stood lost in thought. It was strange how his desires and sympathies had gone out to this old house, hidden away in the Welsh hills. It had already become a thing which he hungered to possess. He would pull down the Victorian portion of it, and rebuild it in the Tudor style of the west wing.

While he was thinking, and visualizing, Hebe had taken her peep at Alex.

When she returned to her guest, she said, "She is deliciously at rest. You never saw such a picture of abandonment in your life."

"Is that so? That son of hers amuses me."

"Alex has the gift of giving herself over to the demands of the moment. Her boy is safe; she needs sleep and rest. She has taken it. She has a big nature; she never frets or worries unnecessarily. It was like that on board ship. If Tony was safe and there was no reason to worry, she used to keep us all in fits of laughter. She seemed to forget everything. She has forgotten everything now. Asleep she looks years younger and far better-looking, poor soul!"

"I can believe that," Franklin Gibson said. He was pensive; his big, clean-shaven face, keenly sensitive and emotional, smiled sympathy. "I just hate," he said fervently, "to think of any woman, far less one gently reared, having to fight the world alone."

"I think Alex Hemingway minds it less than many women. She has rare pluck, and, in a way, she enjoys the gamble."

"She is a rare plucked 'un, I can see that. But all the same, there's a lot in every woman that wants the strong arms of a man, that cries out for protection. My American soul feels like that about every woman. I like to see them the heads of refined homes, doing their best work in refining us men."

"You're a dear, Franklin!" Hebe said. "You have the true American worship for women."

"I have that," he said. "I inherited it from my father. Mine was a beautiful home. No money, mind you, but a rich atmosphere of reverence and soul-culture."

"I wonder what you will think of my other guests?" Hebe said. "By this time to-morrow they will be with us—Evangeline Sarsfield and her mother. They are true Canadians—they

come from the country of Evangeline, from the valley of Grand Pré. They are as strikingly individual in their way as Mrs. Hemingway is in hers."

"Is that so? I never got to Nova Scotia, but I have dreams of seeing that valley before I die. My!" he said emotionally, "isn't there a fine world to see yet?"

"Evangeline is a young Amazon, as straight and tall and slim and fleet of foot as the Indians in her valley. Her mother is rather a foolish little bit of Dresden china—at least, I think so. She has no ideas of her own. Evangeline absolutely rules her. I wonder she isn't more spoilt than she is."

"Don't you like Evangeline?" he asked.

Hebe puckered her brows. "I admire her awfully," she said, "and, yes, I do really like her, vur-ry much, or I shouldn't have asked her here. But sometimes," she laughed, "well, sometimes I could slap her."

"Is that so?" Franklin Gibson laughed. "Then I guess she needs it."

"Well, on board ship she played hide-and-seek with the dearest-hearted man you ever saw—with his heart, I mean."

"And how did she do that?"

"Well, when Bliss Bethune hid it safely away out of her sight, she went and dragged it out just like a dachshund after truffles. Then when she had got it, she didn't want it. She just threw it back again in his face. Oh, she was a naghty gurl."

"Foolish young man!" Franklin Gibson said. "Any woman will do that if the man will let her. It was his own fault. She was just playing the sweet old game."

"Oh, but you haven't seen Evangeline's eyes." She paused. "You just wait until you've seen them. He hadn't a chance."

"Are they something to be afraid of?"

"Have you ever seen blue gentians in Switzerland, just peeping out of the snow on the Alps, when the spring is in the year?"

"I should say there was nothing bluer," he said.

"Then they are Evangeline's eyes."

"Pretty bad for any man, I should say!"

"They quite do for me," Hebe said. "I just forgive her anything, when she uses them to make me sorry."

"I must be on my guard," Franklin Gibson said. "I'm as weak as a kitten over blue eyes."

They had reached the back of the house, and for the next twenty minutes the ardent Franklin was absorbed in its antiquity.

The big dogs at the courtyard entrance, on their high pedestals, greeted him with their habitual expression of "take care." The old banqueting hall and the hidden tower made his bowels yearn for the privilege of ownership. This neglected portion of the house was so desolate, so pathetically different from the front and the west wing. He felt very sorry for it. It might have been miles and miles away from the warm humanity and brightness of the front of the house.

"I will leave you here," Hebe said, "for my feet never will carry me for very long at a spell. I'm just longing to sit down, and I know you will be perfectly happy wandering about at your own free will."

"Is there anything written about the house?" he asked. "I should very much like to go into its history."

"I've not discovered anything, but I haven't tried very hard. You can search the library and see—there's quite a good one, I believe."

"Thank you," he said. "And for the present I'll read my own meaning and romance into these old stones. It's a great privilege you have given me, Mrs. McArthur. I appreciate it very highly."

CHAPTER III

THE house party at Tregaron Manor was proving a great success. Hebe McArthur had the gift of true hospitality and a genius for making her guests feel at ease.

One week had elapsed, and during that time the small party had become intimate with each other and with their surroundings.

"If you keep on feeling like strangers, or visitors, in my house," Hebe had said to Evangeline's mother, who felt a little shy and unaccustomed to her hostess's modern way of taking life and of entertaining her guests, "then we shall all get dreadfully on one another's nerves and weary of even this beautiful place. People can't stand on their hind legs all the time, Mrs. Sarsfield. You must feel that what I really want you to do is just what you like best—stay in bed all day, or sit up all night—only don't, for pity's sake, keep on asking yourself what you think *I* should like when I ask you if you want to do this or that. Just be brutally frank, same as Tony is. Children save a lot of trouble."

Alex Hemingway had responded whole-souledly to Hebe's wise counsel. She had done just what she wanted to do for the whole week, and that was rest and sleep and eat. She had made her first appearance each day at tea-time, and ten o'clock saw her back again to bed.

Her "angel's visits," as Evangeline called them, were extremely effective. They made amusing interludes, to which the party unconsciously looked forward, for Alex's wit, which sometimes could be very sharp, became more keen as her physical strength improved, and it was improving with the rapidity of youth.

In spite of her seeming frankness and friendliness, Alex managed to hold herself aloof, to become less rather than better-known to the party. Intimacy with her seemed impossible. She was a looker-on, while the others lived—or, rather,

one might say amused themselves. She appeared unconscious of the fact. It was simply expressed by her personality. Their life of idle pleasure was a thing so far apart from her own that she could not feel its reality; it amused her to watch their busy idleness.

The blue-eyed Evangeline's form of enjoyment for the time being was evidently casting her line for the American money-fish.

When she was not amusing herself with Tony or flirting with Franklin Gibson, her mornings were passed in roaming the countryside with her long stride and wild, free spirit. She spent enchanted hours in the Wales from whence King Arthur set out for England. Wales was to her "the land of music and mountain, of rock and romance, of lake and legend." From the cottage people she learned the local legends, and began to understand something of their psychology.

Hebe, like Alex, let the fresh, clear morning-air slip by with her head still under the bed-clothes. She slept like a curled-up sand-louse.

The luxurious Mercedes car had taken them lengthy drives each afternoon, but all serious sight-seeing had been postponed until Alex Hemingway felt strong enough to wish to join the party.

Evangeline found herself conscious of the fact that she was not getting to know the real Alex Hemingway, that their talks and discussions drew them no nearer together. She was in her secret soul a little annoyed by the fact that Franklin Gibson, who was a slave to her eyes and to her physical beauty, seemed more interested in the tired Alex than he was in herself. The something which no one could reach in Alex made him unsettled, even while Evangeline's beauty piped the tune to which he danced; but no one can dance for ever. When she was not piping, his interests returned to the woman who had exhausted her youth. She appealed to his more tender senses. It was the shadow-woman in Alex, the will-o'-the-wisp glow in her, which, appearing and disappearing, enabled Franklin Gibson to keep his head against the pretty languishment of Evangeline's eyes.

A week of luxury and complete rest, with the best of country food, amid beautiful surroundings, had done a great deal for

Alex. Once or twice, in the half-lights, he had caught a glimpse of the girl as she had been, and as she could be again, if the luxury and care of her present surroundings were always at her disposal.

This afternoon she was sitting again as she had sat on the day of her arrival, below the Peter Lely portrait, which hung over the mantelpiece in the hall. It was tea-time and the day was warm. She was dressed in her mauve and white frock, with its waist-band of black-and-white striped ribbon. It suited her admirably. To Franklin Gibson it was a charming gown. A man is satisfied with the effect of a gown; a woman is unsatisfied unless that effect is costly.

Alex was growing nervous of Franklin Gibson. She saw his obvious admiration for Evangeline, his almost helplessness under the charm of her eyes; but she knew that her own power over him went deeper than that. More than once he had betrayed what she did not care to know. It was so slight, so indefinite, so undefinable, and yet it was there. There was just this about it: that if she had chosen, Evangeline would not have counted. Tired and pale as she was beside the vital girl, she knew, by the Eve who is in every woman, that if she chose to do even what Evangeline was doing, she could make Franklin Gibson her slave as he never would be Evangeline's. This was no vanity on her part, but a very unwished-for super-knowledge. With all her pallor and lost youth she knew that she could keep the fly from slipping into the web which the callous Evangeline was weaving. If his feet touched it, he would be lost. As her confessed lover, no man could have resisted the sweet wildness of Evangeline.

Alex knew this. But she also knew that while he was free, while his feet had not yet been caught in the delicate web, there were unknown qualities in him which were for her, and not for Evangeline. She had learnt something of this on the afternoon of their first meeting.

Alex did not take much trouble to understand Evangeline. On board ship she had been a lovely, spoilt bit of youth, peeping into a world of pleasure and romance. Alex had been charmed with her freshness, and with her eager anticipation of all which the old world was to give her. Now there seemed to be something a little harder about the girl, some-

thing older, and more worldly-wise. Or was it merely a pose of youth? Was she playing with the rich American to amuse herself, or was she in earnest? Was she out for conquest?

There was one thing which Alex liked very much about her —her affection for her mother, and her womanly understanding of her mother's second blooming, her pleasure in her mother's happiness.

Evangeline had just returned from a long walk, one of her solitary roamings. The romance of the hills was still in her eyes; the scent of Wild Wales clung to her garments. Her appetite for tea was enormous. When she had seated herself at the table she said, quite suddenly:

"How extraordinarily like you are to that portrait, Mrs. Hemingway." She eyed the Peter Lely. "I never noticed it before."

Alex smiled. "How nice of you to think so! That is because I have on a new frock—fine feathers make fine birds."

Franklin Gibson looked at Alex and then at the picture. "You grow more like that portrait every day," he said, "strangely like."

"Let's dress up," Evangeline said, "dress up like all the fine portraits in this house. I'll be the Lady Hamilton—or, rather Emma Hart—in the long gallery; you'll be that Peter Lely—*la belle dame sans merci,* I should say, judging by her very haughty expression. May we, Mrs. McArthur? Who will you be?"

"Why, what a great idea!" Hebe said. "What will you be, Mr. Gibson?"

Alex Hemingway turned to him. "You should be the Oliver Cromwell in the library."

"But why so?" he asked. "When I see all these beautiful ruined abbeys and churches in England, I just feel that I hate that cold reformer, with his plain clothes and plain mind."

"But you are a Puritan at heart, Mr. Gibson," Alex said. "You are the type of the Puritan."

"Of a religious persecutor! Why, isn't that unkind?"

"No—far from that—of an idealist, of the other and greater side of Cromwell's character, the reformer, the idealist."

"I'm glad you have eased my mind," he said. "You don't understand me if you think I can tolerate anything like in-

tolerance or religious persecution. All religions are ideals, and who has any right to insult them?" He smiled. "I don't think I'll be Mr. Cromwell, if you don't mind. I've been in Ireland; I've seen things from an Irish point of view. There is an association there with his name which won't lend itself to gaiety, Mrs. Hemingway, and if we dress up we must play the children's merry game."

"Very well," Alex said. "I really agree with you—Cromwell certainly did not add to the gaiety of nations, even though he personally was not the destroyer of ecclesiastical buildings. Who will you be, Mrs. McArthur?"

"Oh, I know," Evangeline said, "you must be that lovely Spanish woman in the long gallery, with the black fan—the one after Velasquez."

"It would just suit you, Mrs. McArthur." He looked at his hostess. "It never struck me before—you are very Spanish."

"So I've been told," Hebe said, "but I only feel American." She laughed. "It's a safer feeling, I imagine."

"And I certainly don't feel like that autocratic lady up there," Alex said, "although you all seem to see a likeness. I can't imagine feeling as she looks, can you?"

"That expression's dying out," Franklin Gibson said. "It belonged to an autocratic, despotic age, that is passing away."

"If Tony may stay up a little later," Hebe said, "we will all dress up for dinner one night and he can join in the fun afterwards."

"Then Tony must be that darling Gainsborough," Evangeline said. She pointed to a portrait of one of the Pontifex children, a typical example of the beauty and refinement of the English aristocracy of the painter's day. "When shall we do it? What fun it will be! We must all live up to our parts!"

"Yours will be a very easy one," Alex said. "The fair Emma needed only her beauty to make Nelson her adoring slave."

"Oh, but she had brains," Evangeline said, "and she used them for England, don't forget that."

"Yes, for England," Franklin Gibson said. "With all her faults she was loyal and patriotic, a wonderful woman."

"One thinks first of her beauty," Alex said, "and of Nelson's weakness in her hands. She cast a spell over him."

"He recognized the splendid woman she was beneath all her faults, which were the result of her up-bringing, of her youthful surroundings, and most of all of the treatment she received from Greville. I never could tolerate that man! I feel like murder when I think of a man behaving badly to a woman who trusts and loves him."

"I don't think I know enough about the inner life of the famous beauty," Alex said. "I always think of her as the model for all Romney's most enchanting pictures."

"My!" Franklin Gibson said. "She was more than that! She played a big part for England. But the puritanical English have never acknowledged what she did for them. Their petty conventions and ready-made virtue see no deeper than the fact that she was what they chose to call an immoral woman. Nelson's loving, beautiful Emma was something far greater than that. Her trust in Greville, the man whom she idealized and loved, was shamefully abused. He behaved like a cad; he handed her over to Sir William Hamilton as if she had been a bit of his bric-a-brac." Franklin Gibson paused. "She was his best piece, his most rare find, and he threw her back again into the mud."

Hebe looked at the American with meaning in her eyes. "If you had found her, you wouldn't have parted with her. Oh, you dear man, a beautiful woman needs no apologia to you!"

"Greville found her in very humble circumstances, and refined and educated her up to his standard, to be a companion to himself. The girl worshipped him for having lifted her out of the mud, so to speak; he was her ideal of a splendid English gentleman. Then what did he do? He handed her over to his relative, who had taken a fancy to her. Emma went to his uncle believing that she was going to study music in Naples. It makes my blood boil to think of it! Naturally, after that, what trust had she left for anybody? Then when Nelson came along, with his little body and great heart, laying his honour and his love at her feet, giving her a worship which was almost divine, was there any wonder that she forsook the elderly man who had taken her over like a bad debt? Was there any wonder that she accepted the *grande passion* which Nelson offered her?"

"And I have to be all that?" Evangeline said. "I think I'll

change my mind. I only wanted to be the laughing Bacchante who bewitched England's great hero."

"Well, so you can," he said, "for at the time in her life when Romney painted that laughing girl, she had only laughter in her heart; the bitterness had not entered it. Emma's real nature was generous and great."

Evangeline blushed, but no one knew why. Could she act the part of bitterness too? Had the pure gladness of her old, laughter-loving days, the laughter of Grand Pré, changed? What was the game which she was playing now, this trapping of the emotional American by her beauty?

"You must give me a day or two to get some things sorted out to dress us all up in," Hebe said. "I will see what we can find in Tenby, on our way to St. David's. We can go that way if we make an early start. My maid is as cute as a monkey—she'll love showing her skill. She hasn't enough to do here any how."

"So St. David's is settled, is it?" Franklin Gibson said. "I'm very glad to hear that you feel strong enough for the excursion, Mrs. Hemingway. That's ever such good news."

Alex laughed. "By the time that Mrs. McArthur has done with me, I shall be a female Samson, or like a fat woman at a fair. Do you know, she feeds me on something every two hours, and I've slept the round of the clock every night since I've been here, and lain in bed for the greater part of each day! What a waste it is, in such a beautiful place, and in this fine weather! Don't you think I'm disgraceful, Mr. Gibson?"

"If you feel like that it shows you're getting better," Hebe said.

"The spiritual man is reasserting itself," Franklin Gibson said.

And he was right. The physical demands of Alex's being had at first drowned the spiritual. The smell of the pine-woods and the hurrying clouds mattered nothing in comparison with the demands of her body for soft cushions and superb idleness. With bodily restoration, came a reawakened interest in the world outside her luxurious bedroom. The romance of wild Wales became a visionary background to her reviving energies. It was good to know that the hills were there, and a far horizon; that the dark sides of the ravine towered over precipice heights.

The possession of this knowledge was delightful. She played with it in her mind, while her body was still seduced by soft couches and strengthening foods. At first this wonderful world beyond her window had been very dim. Thinking about it had fatigued her. The swift clouds, the wind in the woods, the ceaseless energy of the rushing torrent, were strenuous things. The force of Nature got into her head and unnerved her. She had to turn her back on these hurrying, impetuous energies, which thrust themselves upon her sensuous indulgence and forgetfulness.

But gradually she came to desire them. Good food and luxury were only a means to an end; they were not the things for which she existed. That period had passed. Now the idea of the wild fresh wind on her forehead vitalized her; a week ago it had crumpled her up physically. To-day she would go hatless to some high crag, and listen to the voices of the earth.

Mrs. Sarsfield had not made one of the party at tea while the discussion had taken place about the living pictures. When she came into the hall, apologizing for what there was never any need to apologize for at Tregaron Manor—being late for tea—there was a cry of:

"Oh, who will Mrs. Sarsfield be?"

"Come along, Mrs. Sarsfield," Hebe said, "we have got a splendid idea of amusing ourselves! We're all going to be very young, and dress up."

"That's not very difficult for mamma," Evangeline said, "for I've never allowed her to grow up. Mamma has to keep me young. When she grows old, I shall be Methuselah."

"Oh, Eve!" Mary Sarsfield said. "You don't know how old I feel, or how young."

"Just as young as you look, madam," Franklin Gibson said gallantly, as he handed her a cup of tea. A servant who must have been lying in wait for Mrs. Sarsfield's appearance, had already brought in a small silver teapot and fresh hot cakes. Servants at Tregaron Manor administered to the wants of guests like attendant sprites. Evangeline had declared once that if she was not allowed to do something for herself soon, she would be compelled to throw things about the floor, so as to be able to pick them up. To bath herself was as much as a

well-servanted Englishwoman was allowed to do, she declared.

To Franklin Gibson's remark, Mrs. Sarsfield said:

"That must be old enough to be Eve's mother. She is a very practical proof of my age."

Alex laughed. "You couldn't look old enough for that, Mrs. Sarsfield—no woman could."

"You pig!" Evangeline said good-naturedly. "What do you mean by that? I'll swear I look no older that you do!"

"I mean," Alex said, "that no human woman could look old enough to be the mother of Eve, to have wisdom for her child."

"And I am Wisdom?" Evangeline said. Her voice was so tragic that even her mother joined in the laugh. "Do you think I'm Wisdom, Mr. Gibson?" Evangeline turned the blueness of her eyes full on the gallant American.

"You are Beauty," he said. "You are to be Lady Hamilton, the woman who bewitched the bravest heart in England."

"Thank you," she said. "You are always so nice. For poor mamma it is easier to mother Beauty than Wisdom, for Wisdom is so often unwise." Evangeline stooped and kissed Mrs. Sarsfield. "They mustn't say horrid things about your only child, mamma, must they—your one ewe lamb?"

"Is Wisdom so very horrid?" Alex asked. "Solomon asked for it."

"I always think he must have been a fool to do it, if Wisdom means being wise; wise people are always unloved. It is the gay and light-hearted whom the world wants. I'd rather be foolish and be wanted than be wise and treated like a solicitor."

"Oh, Evangeline, having wisdom means using your knowledge rightly." Her mother was nervous of her girl's tongue.

"Oh, Mary Sarsfield," Evangeline said, "I don't care a fig about Solomon's kind of wisdom. Your kind is much more profitable. Tell me how to get two good husbands and I'll snap my fingers at all the Solomons in the world!"

The party laughed sympathetically, for they knew what Evangeline meant. She often teased her mother about her engagement, her second blooming, her clever plotting and unfair monopoly.

In Wales Evangeline had grown very beautiful—wind-tanned and physically perfect. Hebe, whose little "paddles"

about the garden-paths never helped her circulation, was generally chilly. Evangeline was young enough and active enough never to feel cold. Her "fine organdies" and transparent crèpes and laces made Hebe shiver even on the best of summer days.

When Evangeline rose from the tea-table and said, "Who will come for a stroll in the garden?" she soon found herself followed by Franklin Gibson. Her last tender appeal to him sent him after her. She was standing now at the top of the garden-steps, in a considerate, patient manner. She smiled graciously as he came up to her.

"This is the hour I love best in the glen," she said. "Won't you come?"

"Of course I'll come," he said. He was dancing to the tune she piped, and Evangeline was in her best "come hither" mood. Her eyes said, "Come out and play"; the imp of mischief was sitting on her shoulder. Some influence outside herself tempted her to weigh her beauty and youth against Alex's indefinable magnetism. Above all things, she wanted to pour balm on her own wounded vanity.

They wandered through the summer beauty of the garden to the black sides of the deep ravine, Evangeline talking lightly and yet tenderly of her far-off Acadia; of its meadows knee-deep in daisies and aflame with fireweed; of Mount Blomidon, looking like a great turquoise in the soft light across the valley; and of the long-billed humming-birds.

She set the pace, a little ahead of Franklin Gibson, and threw him glances, mocking or tender, over her left shoulder; her curling lips were dangerously young and provoking in their softness.

At last they reached the high crag above the Devil's Cauldron. On their slippery way through the glen conversation had dwindled. Evangeline was standing, poised like a goat on the top of the crag, her skirts wind-swept round her clean limbs, her dark hair blown out from her forehead, a very Diana of the Uplands. No man with human blood in his veins could have watched her and not desired her.

"Come and stand just here!" she cried. "It's glorious! This is Tony's Merlin's cave. This Devil's Cauldron has almost reconciled his childish heart to England. Nothing came up to Canada before he saw this; he was pathetically Canada-sick."

"I am glad the wind is blowing you landwards," Franklin Gibson said. "You are poised like an antelope or a hartebeest of the African plains. They love standing on gigantic ant-hills."

"Listen," she said. "Merlin is awfully angry to-day. The noise is more than usually horrible."

It was certainly an appalling noise, like the hurling together of large stones, and their rebounding with terrific fury against the walls of an unseen cave. Evangeline's eyes glowed; the romance and mystery of the place fired her imagination.

"Of course, like a good American, you've read your Malory before coming to Wales, Mr. Gibson? You remember the end of poor Merlin?"

"I remember that Merlin was the King's magician and wise adviser, and that the fair and cruel Nimue inveigled him to the top of the wonderful cavern, on purpose to get rid of him." His eyes looked into Evangeline's. The fair Nimue was pitiless; she knew the power of her beauty and youth on the wretched Merlin.

Evangeline withdrew her eyes. "I told Tony the story, and, do you know, he firmly believes that poor old Merlin is still imprisoned in this cavern. The wicked Nimue is quite real to him; he prays for her every night."

"I forget," Franklin Gibson said, "just how she managed to get Merlin inside the cavern, and did he never get out again?"

"When he said good-bye to King Arthur, he knew quite well that he was going to his doom, that his love for the enchantress was to be his own undoing. Yet he went off to Cornwall with her; I suppose he thought the game was worth the candle—he did it with his eyes open. In Cornwall he showed Nimue all the wonders of that land and taught her all his powers of magic. He was so crazy about her—'besotted' with love, as Malory says—that he couldn't help himself. When King Arthur asked him why he was so eager to go with her when he knew that she would kill him when she was tired of him, the poor old thing said, 'Because I cannot help myself. It is Fate.' When they got to Cornwall he showed her a wonderful cavern, made by magic out of a solid rock. Its mouth was closed by two mighty stones."

"I remember that. Please go on—it's fresher in your memory than in mine."

"Well, old Merlin was so intoxicated with love that, at her bidding, he used his powers of magic and removed the stones which sealed the cavern's mouth. He was so delighted, poor soul, to be able to give her any pleasure, that he even offered to show her all the marvels that were concealed in the cave. But the moment he entered it, Nimue put to use the magic he had taught her. She made the stones sink back, 'with a mighty sound,' that's Malory, into their place, and old love-sick Merlin was shut in the cavern. Only Nimue could set him free, and that she would never do because . . ."—Evangeline laughed—". . . well—you know why—because of the humanest of all reasons to a woman—he was a bore."

Franklin Gibson laughed at her expression of sympathy for the cruel Nimue. "Well, I remember," he said, "that Renan excuses Marcus Aurelius's wife her infidelity to her husband on the ground that he was a bore—as a man and a husband, I take it."

"I agree with Renan," Evangeline said. "And I'm glad he had the pluck to say so. Do you know that for about three successive Christmases in Canada I got charmingly-bound editions of the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius from my friends? They bored me to tears. He was dull enough to have been a Christian instead of a good pagan, don't you think?"

"Why, Miss Sarsfield, was St. Francis dull? I don't like to hear your lips say such things."

"No, no. But you must admit that St. Francis had a pagan soul, though his outward expression was Christian—his songs to the sun, his sermons to the birds—oh, I love him! My greatest desire is to visit his city. Glastonbury has made me want to go to Assisi most frightfully." She paused. "In the Chalice Hostel there was always much talk of St. Francis. In Canada I have been given lots and lots of editions of 'The Little Flowers of St. Francis.' There was a sort of cult for St. Francis with us in Grand Pré, just as there was for Marcus Aurelius. I'm too young to have known the Browning cult—that's quite dead. They speak of Browning now as 'nineteenth-century,' don't they? It makes him seem such a way back!"

"You were fortunate to live in such an intellectual circle."

"Oh, but we weren't intellectual—it was a fashion. Marcus Aurelius is awfully suburban nowadays—things have changed. We're all for outdoor sport now, and Red Cross Societies. We might be anticipating another Civil War. I am a highly-certificated V.A.D., if you please! Marcus Aurelius was ponderous," she said. "He lacked passion. St. Francis didn't."

"Do you know what another great French writer said of Marcus Aurelius?—that he 'thought like a man, felt like a woman, and acted like a child'?"

"I am too ignorant of history to know how he acted," Evangeline said. "I only know his reminiscences, bound in green leather with such fine gold. I prefer my Malory. Oh, wasn't his a glorious age to live in?—I mean, the age from which he took his legends. Fancy, if on my way home I wanted to avoid being seen by Mrs. McArthur and Alex Hemingway, I could just turn both you and myself into stone-trees until they had passed! Do you remember how Morgan le Fay turned herself and all her followers into stone images when her brother was searching for her after she had betrayed him?"

"Or supposing, like Nimue, you lured me into that deep cavern, Miss Evangeline? Supposing your blue eyes led me there whether I wanted to go or not, and then you left me to my fate?"

"But you have taught me no magic . . . you couldn't move the stones."

"I have a great deal of money," he said very simply, "and money can buy most things, magic included?"

"To-day it's the 'Open Sesame' to a great deal," she said lightly. "In King Arthur's day money never seemed to matter. The poorest knight, if he could fight a brave foe and win, did the most extravagant things. That was the day of romance and chivalry, not money and progress and worldly ambition."

"And to-day," he said, "is romance quite dead?"

"It has no power against the magic of wealth," she said, "for wealth means position, freedom and pleasure."

"I think romance worth everything in the world," he said. "Poor, foolish Merlin, he has my sympathy! His love was stronger than himself; he sacrificed everything to it."

"His absolute devotion bored Nimue. She had to rid herself

of him. No man with any sense would sell his strength and free will to a woman."

"Samson and Delilah," he said, "the old, old story. A wise man becomes a fool when he is in love."

The summer wind was playing through the pine-trees; the roar of the river was monotonous, threatening. They were compelled to listen to it.

"Is the noise of these stones pounding together accounted for scientifically, I wonder? Perhaps they became detached from the inside of the rock by some great upheaval; they can't get out at the narrow mouth of the cavern and so they go on rolling and smashing together when that inrush of water goes over them."

"Don't you dare to say that to Tony!" Evangeline said. "This is Merlin's prison. I believe that he would willingly wait here for any length of time, on the chance of seeing the cruel Nimue come and release him. He said he'd ask the Blessed Virgin every night in his prayers to change her heart and make her set poor old Merlin free. I think this ravine and cave are curiously like the description of Merlin's cave in Malory. And why shouldn't it be? No one really knows whether Camelot was Winchester or Glastonbury or Wales. At the Chalice Hostel you daren't even suggest that it was Winchester. I suppose at Winchester they contest the honour in the same way?"

"Have it where you like," he said. "You are a modern enchantress, you can do pretty well what you choose. And those knights did seem to travel wonderful distances on horseback in a few days. But I must remember the fate of Merlin, the power of beauty. I think it is best for me to get right away from the spot."

"You are afraid!" Evangeline called out, tauntingly.

Franklin Gibson turned round quickly. "Yes, I am afraid of your blue eyes," he said. "Mrs. McArthur told me that I should have to take care; you might prove as cruel as Nimue."

Evangeline sprang after him. "Anyhow, Nimue was faithful to the King; she was faithful to her own heart. She adored King Arthur; she used her witchcraft to save his life. Surely that was sufficient atonement for her treatment of the foolish old Merlin?"

"Why did she ever inveigle old Merlin into her clutches? She couldn't have wanted him."

"Ah," Evangeline said, "why?" She sighed. "Perhaps when a woman can't get one thing, she just plays with another. Or perhaps she wanted to learn his witchcraft—and to make him love her. But here they come," she said. "I believe this is the first time that Mrs. Hemingway has ventured as far as the crag. I wonder what she'll think of the Devil's Cauldron?"

When they came to within speaking distance, Evangeline detected a hint of annoyance in Hebe McArthur's voice when she addressed her. Hebe was annoyed. The girl was spoiling her plan. She had been irritated at the way in which Franklin Gibson had followed Evangeline when she left the tea-table. He was a stupid fellow, to dance to every tune the girl piped. It was a case of blow hot, blow cold with Evangeline. She could see almost with her eyes shut that the emotional American had been letting the wine of Evangeline's beauty go to his head. The only thing for him was total abstinence.

"Oh, Mrs. Hemingway," Evangeline said enthusiastically, "this is your first visit to Tony's wonderland, to Merlin's prison."

Alex could have loved Evangeline for her love of Tony, for the way in which she had managed to take the place of Bartholomew in his days. Her stock of fairy-stories was unending, her own belief in his pet fairies unquestioning. Alex returned Evangeline's sympathetic smiles with happy eyes.

"He has told me all about it," she said. "Nimue and Merlin are as real to him as anything at Tregaron."

"And why not?" Evangeline said. "In this country they can't be very far from us. To-morrow we are going to St. David's. I wish the morning would come quickly, for Mr. Gibson says that according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, St. David was the uncle of King Arthur. He was the Bishop of Menevia, which is the old name for St. David's. I know I shall love the place."

"Oh, you strangers within our gates," Alex said, "of course you know all about the history of the place and the romance of it."

"But I don't know it, Mrs. Hemingway," Hebe said. "I'm sure I don't know how Mr. Gibson has had the time to make a

fortune and accumulate all the knowledge of these old places which he possesses. It leaves me tired. His history is always at his finger-ends."

"Why, Mrs. McArthur, don't write me down a bore before this young lady, for she has just been arguing with me that Nimue was justified in treating Merlin as she did because he was a bore. She says she'd as soon be a leper as a bore."

"I don't know how Nimue treated Merlin," Hebe said. "Does it come into any opera? Mrs. Hemingway and I have been talking about far more practical and less high-falutin' things—how to make wild raspberry syrup, and how to bottle fruits as they do in Germany and Canada."

"Don't you love wild raspberries?" Evangeline said. "I used to almost live on them during one holiday which we spent at Port Royal. The wild fruit here makes me very homesick. It's so mean and poor; you should see the raspberries of Grand Pré!"

"The wild fruits in Canada were over weeks and weeks ago," Alex said. "Here they are so late."

"You burst right into summer, don't you, in Canada?" Hebe said.

"Where I was we did," Alex said abstractedly, for she was listening again to the rolling of the big stones and to the hiss of the foaming water. She seemed mesmerized by the sound; her eyes were fixed on the swirling pool.

"However did the stones get into it?" Hebe said wonderingly. "I suppose just in the same way as the milk got into the cocoanut!"

They all laughed. The remark was so typical of her indolent, lazy mind. The place had filled Evangeline's head with romance. It had mesmerized and silenced Alex Hemingway. Hebe, though she thought it was very wonderful in her happy, light-hearted eyes, was occupied with a more material problem; how she was to carry off Evangeline and free Franklin Gibson from her web.

"Let us 'change partners,'" she said at last, as she linked her arm in Evangeline's. "Let us two go on ahead and allow Mr. Gibson to tell Mrs. Hemingway something about her own country. I should forget everything he told me before I got to St. David's, if he began upon it now. I shall forget it, anyhow,

soon after I've seen it. But that makes no difference to my love for old places and fine buildings. I get so mixed up in their history—that's the trouble."

"Everyone must," Evangeline said. "I've seen so little yet, so it isn't difficult for me to remember it all pretty clearly. And St. David's is connected with Glastonbury, so that will help. It won't be entirely fresh ground. St. David's, I believe, is almost as lovely in its own way as Glastonbury, isn't it?"

But Mrs. McArthur was not listening, as she pattered with small steps down the steep incline which took them from the high crag over the Devil's Cauldron to the path through the wood. Presently she disturbed the silence.

"Miss Sarsfield," she said, confidentially, with her most Southern intonation, "I have such hopes that those two will draw together. Wouldn't it be fine?"

Evangeline looked surprised. "Wouldn't it be just splendid?" she said. "I thought myself he admired her the very first time I saw them together. And each day he gets more and more interested in her, doesn't he? And she gets more and more attractive. To-day she is awfully charming, don't you think?"

"Yes. But you're a 'naghty' girl, Evangeline!"

"Me? How, Mrs. McArthur?"

"Well, I've confided to you my little plan, and you have been upsetting it."

"How have I been upsetting it?" Evangeline laughed guiltily.

"Why, with those blue eyes of yours. You know what men are like—don't pretend to me that you don't."

Evangeline laughed. "Mrs. McArthur," she said, "Franklin Gibson knows what I'm worth—he's no fool."

"All men are fools when your blue eyes are near them. They were made to upset them, poor dears! You're worth a very great deal, Evangeline," Hebe said affectionately. "But something's happened to you. You're quite different; you're not the girl of the *Andalusia*. You played a cat-and-mouse game on board the boat with that poor poet, but he was a fool who let you do it." She took Evangeline's long, beautifully strong hand in her very feminine ones. "Something or someone has hurt you, Evangeline. Is it your mother's marriage? Can you tell me?"

"Oh, no! That's the nicest and softest thing that ever happened. If you only saw them together, Mrs. McArthur, you would envy mother." Evangeline looked very serious, as if some idea had suddenly come to her. There was something in the English doctor's manner towards her mother which reminded her of Franklin Gibson's attitude to all women. They were both large-hearted, simple men; both were true knights in their old-fashioned gallantry and reverence for romance and women.

"I'm glad it isn't your mother's marriage," Hebe said, "for it does seem to me very hard lines that a woman like your mother, who has the chance of a second happy married life held out to her, should not take it, that it should be spoilt by the jealousy of her child, especially when children leave their mother for the men they love."

"I shan't spoil mamma's romance," Evangeline said. "When the doctor asked me for her hand in marriage, I gave it at once. He knew that I was delighted. There was no trouble. I think it is a splendid settling-down for her."

"Oh, you funny child! Did he do that? Did he ask you for your mother's hand?" Hebe laughed delightedly.

"I have always brought mamma up. Can you imagine that little nosegay of sweet innocence brushing up against lawyers and bankers and shipping-clerks and hotel-keepers? For as long as I can remember anything, I have managed mamma and all her affairs."

"You've carried her about in your arms like a baby—I saw you." Hebe laughed sympathetically.

"No," Evangeline said. "That belongs to a later development. She had influenza some years ago, and when she was too weak to walk during her convalescence I carried her. I got into the way of doing it. I should think that we'd quarrelled, or that something had happened, if I didn't whip her up every now and then. My arms would feel very empty."

"Women's arms do feel empty, don't you think, until children come to fill them? We're all born mothers, we women."

Evangeline gave Hebe's arm an understanding pressure.

"The most independent women are such lone things," Hebe said. "Their empty arms mock at worldly greatness and wealth. Day by day I find myself recognizing that Alex Hemingway

is far richer than either you or me, that she lives on a higher plane, that she has attained something which we haven't."

"Her boy is a darling!" Evangeline said. "He has developed a great fancy for me since we've been here. On board ship it was you, not me."

"Yes, the young rogue! You have cut me out entirely."

"It's because I tell him fairy-stories; Malory is my widow's cruse. Besides, bless him, he thinks that I need his help." Evangeline smiled. "He has seen me carrying mamma, and he volunteered to help me with her. He says that he often nurses his mummie and looks after her when she is ill."

"Bless his dear, dear heart!" Hebe said. "What a manly little chap he is. If he was mine, I shouldn't envy the Queen."

They had drifted far from their original conversation. Little had been said that really mattered. Yet the talk had drawn the women much closer together. Hebe realized that Evangeline, like herself, would rejoice if they could bring off her little plan for Franklin Gibson and Alex Hemingway. Hebe had been very adroit; Evangeline felt flattered by her confidence and by the suggestion that only by the withdrawal of her own fascination could the plan be accomplished.

Hebe asked Evangeline to call her by her Christian name, and Evangeline confessed that being called "Miss Sarsfield" by everyone except her own mother often made her so homesick for Grand Pré and for the people who knew her intimately, that she felt like booking a berth in the next liner and flying off.

"I know Evangeline is a terrible mouthful," she said, "but what else can you make of it, except Eve? and that's mamma's privilege."

"No other name would suit you, now that I've thought of you as Evangeline. You are Evangeline."

"Doesn't it sound lovesick and sentimental to you? Longfellow's Evangeline has set the type for all Evangelines in England." Her secret thoughts had flown back to the evening at the Chalice Hostel.

"You have wiped out Longfellow's Evangeline. I shall always think of Evangeline now as a modern girl, with the bluest eyes I ever saw. I declare, I never knew that eyes could be so blue."

"It's only a case of contrast—my dark hair makes them look bluer than they are."

"You're modest not to say dark lashes," Hebe said, as she threw a look over her shoulder. Her own dark eyes laughed. "Oh, the couple are getting on all right," she said. "They have only moved about a hundred yards. He's got away from your eyes, you naghty child! He's deep in George Borrow, you bet, obsessed by 'Wild Wales.' "

"They seem to have too much to say to allow of quick walking anyhow—or, rather, slipping over this path," Evangeline said. "Mr. Gibson hasn't got 'Wild Wales' feet, has he?"

"Too much to talk about" was the truth with Franklin Gibson and Alex. Their dallying was unconscious. Franklin was at the moment deep in a discussion, not about Wild Wales, but about the imperative need for improvement in the social conditions of the working classes in England's industrial centres.

"If I was an Englishman, and I didn't see any chance of improvement . . . why, I just couldn't go on living," he said.

His mind was always full of the subject. It had been burning in his brain ever since he had made a tour of the industrial centres of Great Britain. In Australia, which he had visited to push his motor-business, he had come under the influence of W. M. Hughes. He saw in him Australia's Abraham Lincoln. He was still under his influence; he saw industrial England with Hughes' eyes. He had just quoted from a speech which he had heard him make.

As he spoke the words earnestly and appealingly, Alex wondered how he had come by his own great wealth, if he had carried out any of the plans which he suggested. She scarcely liked to ask him, and he had not volunteered the information. She was not defending England's attitude towards the industrial and labouring classes, but she had been brought up to regard such a state of things as wholly natural as the rising of the sun each morning. There was a world born to rule and another born to make the ruling classes rich and comfortable. That the labouring classes had been created for the benefit of the rich was no man's fault. It was fate. She, by her own folly, had stepped out of her own world; she was entering the world of labour; she would have to enter into its contests. Loyalty to her traditions and class would prevent her from complaining.

"And are labour conditions so ideal in America?" she said. "Is there such an Utopia anywhere as you suggest?"

"They are far from ideal with us," he said, "but nowhere are the social conditions of the labouring classes so soul-sickening as in England. And we in America are progressing. We aren't lying down under it; it isn't any part of our tradition. We aren't looked upon as revolutionary if we deplore it."

"Do you think there ever could be equality of wealth?"

"No," he said, "that's absurd. But if I didn't pay every man in my factory what his work was worth to me, not what I can get his work for, and give him besides a small interest in the concern, I couldn't go to bed at night; I couldn't be left alone with my own soul."

Alex knew that his wealth was "motor-cars." His famous "Spender" was one of the cheapest cars on the market. "I'm glad you do that," she said.

"I do," he said, "and so do many others in my country. Apart from everything else, it pays, Mrs. Hemingway, to get the best brains, the best energy, the best enthusiasm, the best men. I pay them five dollars a day—that's a pound—and their small percentage." He laughed. "It hasn't broke the Spender factory; it's carried it right along by leaps and bounds. And it will carry it further still."

Alex was silent. Into her mind came the strange contrast between this active-minded commercial man, whose inquisitive eyes always unnerved her, and her idle, well-bred husband. Larry had always been a drone, living on the labour of others, as thoughtless and callous of the subject of the progress of humanity as the male bee. Well, she had kicked him out of the hive, and there was an end of it. As the wife of a man like Franklin Gibson life would have been extraordinarily different and extremely interesting. His passion for history and objects of art and ancient architecture saved him from being one-sided; it refined the commercial man effectively.

"I don't want to bore you, Mrs. Hemingway," he said, "and I'm afraid I have already done so; it's a mighty dangerous thing for a man to let himself go on his favourite topic, especially when he finds an intelligent and patient listener. I apologise."

"Oh, don't! I'm not bored. People are much more interesting

when they are talking about what they are interested in, don't you think?—'shop,' if you like to call it so."

"I'm interested in so many things," he said. "I ought to be quite interesting myself, according to your theory." He laughed, a little sadly, for he could not forget that to the youthful Evangeline he had proved a bore.

"You are interesting to me," Alex said, "for you make me think."

"You make *me* think," he said earnestly.

"Do I?" Alex spoke nervously. "I wonder why? I haven't had brains enough lately to make a fly think. You must only think I am stupid."

"Why, no," he said. "I find myself thinking and thinking about you, trying to find out just what it is that makes me think about you, what it is that places you quite apart, makes you aloof, individual."

"I'm so sorry. Am I inattentive, uninterested?"

"No, it's when you are most attentive, Mrs. Hemingway, that you are most aloof. You guard your soul so very jealously; you give to others only your outward self; you ask for no sort of spiritual companionship."

"I have so little to give. I exist only for Tony and in Tony. It's because I'm such a husk that I've made you curious; you are always looking for something deeper."

"Oh, don't say that!" he cried. "The mere fact of Life is so wonderful, Mrs. Hemingway. We live surrounded by miracles. Life is a great privilege—don't you feel that?"

"But I only exist," Alex said. "The old me, who once thought these things wonderful, is dead. The other me just exists in my boy. I am only alive for him; he is my real self."

"You loved some man as greatly as all that?" Franklin Gibson said. He looked at her earnestly. "There again you have enjoyed the greatest privilege; you have lived on a higher plane; you have partaken of the great sacraments of love, and realized the miracle of motherhood. Yours was the true sacrament of holy matrimony, Mrs. Hemingway. It is such love as yours which makes marriage sacred; too often it is profane." He smiled. "Isn't it just a little ungracious to feel towards life as you are feeling now?"

Alex's thin face had flushed. The man's emotional tempera-

ment had taken her life's tragedy into his own hands. He had created it. His kindly sympathy for her suffering made her feel a ridiculous liar. Larry, the partaker of her joys in the holy sacrament of marriage, was probably at this moment enjoying himself spending the last dregs of the money which he had made from his sale of skins and heads.

Franklin Gibson broke in on her reverie. "Will you grant me a privilege, Mrs. Hemingway? May I come and see you in your London home?" His eyes held hers. "I should like to enjoy myself with Tony at the Zoo or Hampstead Heath. Have you ever been to Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday?"

Alex laughed. "My stepmother would scarcely have approved of the outing, when I was a child."

"Why, it's a great education," he said, "to see a lump-mass of city workers at play, to see that a spirit of fun and love of enjoyment is still alive in a class whose surroundings are vile enough to kill anything but the grossest passions in human beings. I've been there twice," he said, "and if I'm in London in August, I mean to go again. They enjoy themselves in their own fashion, but it is enjoyment. From morning until night they never tire. I always say a stranger ought to see Henley, for it is representative of England's upper classes at play; Hampstead Heath on August Bank Holiday is representative of the working classes. My, but I do want to give them more of it, when I see them half-intoxicated with the mere fact of being in the fresh air! It makes me feel a selfish capitalist."

"I had never any chance of even thinking of doing such a thing, before I was married. English people don't do it, you know."

"You have a stepmother?" he asked. His inquisitive eyes expressed satisfaction. He had learned one thing more about her personal affairs; she had actually volunteered the information.

"Yes," she said, "I still have very much a stepmother. She's all step, I'm afraid, and . . ."

"Not much mother."

"Not one scrap. My father married her when I was at school. I came home one summer holiday to find her installed as my 'new mamma.' "

"Is that so?" he said.

"She was my father's nurse when he was very ill. She just married him while he was too weak to resist."

"Is he happy with her in his married life?"

"Happy is a big word, Mr. Gibson. He is very easy-going. She spends his income, and he, fortunately, is very little at home. He is at sea, all the time, you know."

"In the Navy?"

Alex nodded her head.

"The boy's to go into it, too—is that so?"

"I hope so. That is what I'm working for."

"You women leave us men far behind, Mrs. Hemingway. Your fortitude is magnificent. A woman's great quality is fortitude. And yet in this country you are refused a vote!"

"I don't think I want one. I have responsibilities enough as it is."

"That's so," he said. He paused. "It will take some great upheaval to set England right, to lift her out of her rut. She can't get along like this for ever—any stranger can see that, Mrs. Hemingway."

"You think not? And yet you like her; you leave America to come here over and over again?"

"Why, I can't keep away from her," he said, "I just love her. But I'm afraid for her; she's like . . . well, I don't know what she's like to me—something that I can't keep away from, anyhow—some wonderful object of priceless beauty, that is blemished and scarred all over. I want to restore her, I want to see her spiritual nature revived—or, I should say, developed."

"How strange," Alex said, "the effect it has on other eyes! To me it is all one big accumulation of customs and conventions and beauty and ugliness, an inherited accumulation, which makes up home and England. England wouldn't be England if she was less tragic or less callous, less muddle-headed and indifferent."

"We are speaking of Great Britain when you say England, I presume, Mrs. Hemingway?"

"Oh yes," Alex said. "It is north of the Tweed that you get that jealous distinction. South of that landmark 'England' means the British Isles. We have Scotland and Ireland just as much in our minds when we use the word 'England' as we have the country south of the Tweed. I can make a Scotch aunt

of mine so annoyed that she won't send Tony a Christmas present and he's her godchild—if at any time near Christmas I forget and put N.B. on her letters, instead of Scotland."

"You should only do that when the present isn't good enough. So you are partly Scots?" He was probing again.

"No, she's only an aunt by marriage."

"I have not yet received permission to call on you in London."

"You should ask me on the last day of my stay at Tregaron," she said. "You may regret it—you have only known me for one week."

"I don't feel like that," he said. "You belong to England, to this place."

"To this place?" Alex said quickly. "Whatever makes you think of such a thing?"

"I don't think it," he said, "I feel it. You're in the mystery of that hidden stream; you are as elusive and haunting as everything else which makes up the spirit of Wales. You are a wraith-woman," he said meditatively. "One day I see you clearly, the next you are gone—you are a shadow in a mist."

"That is because I spend half the day in bed," she said. It was an effort to take his grave words lightly.

"I mean it. But it's so hard to explain what I mean. Haven't you ever come to a new place and felt that you knew it quite well, that you had seen it before, that things were strangely familiar? In this place I have seen you in many forms—it may be, in your former incarnation, if you can call it that. You are least yourself, your real self, when your material presence is near. I have seen you in many, many different settings. I have often seen you in those big gold frames which hold the proud Pontifexes. I see you as a little child, in Victorian clothes, playing about these paths." He paused. "Isn't it odd, how clearly our subconscious selves can see things, and how very, very hard it is to explain them to others?"

Alex was agitated, uneasy. "In London you will see me as a strenuous boarding-house-keeper."

"Then I have your permission? I want to help you, Mrs. Hemingway. I am a business man. I'd like to feel that you would apply to me if you wanted advice."

"I will," Alex said. "I shall only be too happy if you will come, and let me look upon you as a friend in need."

"I will be that," he said, "and I'm not saying what I don't mean. Do you know, one of the saddest disappointments in having made money, in realizing wealth, lies in the fact that one can't spend it as one would like, that one can't help the people one would most enjoy helping. We are asked for money for strangers, who may or may not be worthy of any help; we have to hand over large sums to all sorts of schemes; but we may only offer flowers and theatre-tickets to people like you. Oh," he cried, "you wouldn't believe how angry it makes me! It would be so delightful if we could be quite natural and simple in such matters."

"I think it would be delightful," she said, "but that and so much more belong to the inherited order of things. It just can't be; it's one of the silly conventions that have their root in wisdom."

"After a bit, Mrs. Hemingway, there gets to be a terrible monotony in mere wealth, and a sad lack of new methods of spending it."

"I'd like to try," Alex said, "just to have the excitement of spending as much as I liked for one long day."

"I wish you could," he said. "But you'd find it pall if you had it always. It grows monotonous."

"If you can buy the best of everything and anything," Alex said, "and do anything you like, I suppose it would become boring. Spending would cease to be a pleasure if you could just as well buy up the whole shop and be done with it."

"That's why I find more joy in discovering some treasure in a thieves' market and doing it up. In part I've created it; my brains as well as my money have paid for it. Brains, Mrs. Hemingway—that is the force behind all capital. Your English trades-unionists forget that."

"Brains are the most unequally distributed of all capitals," Alex said, "which seems to me to indicate that there was always meant to be a shockingly unequal distribution of wealth."

"Not at all," he said. "A man with brains couldn't make a fortune without the sweat and labour of the workers. He probably by nature is totally unfitted for a life of strenuous physical labour. It is his brain which creates; the labourers are the hands which drive. It is evenly divided; it ought to be partnership."

"Then do you think that my servants ought to share in the profits of my boarding-house when I start it?"

"It would be a good plan," he said eagerly, "a very good plan indeed. It is not an uncommon one in France and Italy. Why not try it in London?"

"Do you really mean it?"

"Yes, I do. But whatever you do, don't offer low wages because of giving that interest—offer good wages, a decent living wage, what the servant's work is worth to you, not what you can get it for—what it is worth in keeping your house going. Mind, you can't do without them, Mrs. Hemingway. And also give them a small percentage on all bills. No one could pay a high enough wage to reward a person for being at another person's beck and call from seven a.m. until ten p.m. every day, could they?"

"Would it ever pay if I did? I only meant to charge thirty shillings a week—or, at the highest, thirty-five shillings."

"If it's going to pay you at all," he said, "it can be made to pay on that basis—and pay better. Why don't you make it a sort of residential club, so to speak? Make everyone deposit a few shillings when they enter—a sort of club fee. Call your house 'St. Michael's Residential Club.' These shillings would go some way towards your servants' percentage."

"What an idea!" Alex said excitedly. "I believe it's just what I shall do—an entrance-fee, but no annual subscription." She laughed. "Oh, how funny!"

"There will always be a coming-and-going—there's bound to be. And, believe me, you'll find that a small percentage on the profits will make the servants interested in the concern; they will stick to you, and make the boarders comfortable."

"I'm so stupid about that sort of thing," Alex said. She looked distressed. "Percentages will be the death of me."

"My!" he said, "but I can soon show you how to reckon it up, to make out the bills. We'll make the thing a dandy success. Why, you'll have a big concern before long! I wish I was struggling again."

Alex was elated. His enthusiasm braced her.

"You have some capital, Mrs. Hemingway?"

"Yes, a little."

"Do you mind telling me how much?"

"About nine hundred pounds."

"That's not so bad. What has that got to cover?"

"I've taken a big furnished house in St. Michael's Square. It will hold fifteen boarders—more, at a push; that is in single-bedded rooms. It's a fine big house. The money's got to pay the rent and set the thing going—wages, food, coal, light—everything, until the fees come in."

"No deposit to be paid on the furnished house?"

"I've paid it. I have the nine hundred clear to go ahead on."

"Good!" he said. "We'll make a success of it. Run it cheap, but not too cheap. Take my advice—get good-class servants, and pay them well. The small difference between good wages and bad in a case like this isn't worth considering—you won't fail on the extra expenditure. And give them a small percentage on all bills. Let them put a personal interest in the success of St. Michael's Residential Club."

"You are awfully kind to be so interested!"

"No, I'm not. It's just sport to me, ever such fine sport. I love a gamble. I wish I had my fortune to make all over again. I should like to start in on nine hundred pounds and see where I'd come out."

"It's all I've got," Alex said. "I must not gamble too hard—there's Tony."

"Nine hundred pounds, Mrs. Hemingway, even at 'Spender' interest, would scarcely bring you in sixty pounds a year. Well, that's a mere flea-bite for the boy. You've got to gamble with your gold, or it isn't much good. It won't go far on that young gentleman, I know."

Alex's eyes assented. He was wholly the commercial business man in his interested working out of her scheme.

"Now, in the way you are laying it out, I don't see why you shouldn't stand to win a very good living for yourself and your boy. It will be hard work," he said, "very hard work—I hate to think of it. But you've got it in you, Mrs. Hemingway, to carry this thing through, and I know that Mrs. McArthur and the Sarsfields are prepared to send all the guests they can to you."

"And with your advice and encouragement," Alex said, as she held out her hands to him, "I feel sure I can pull it through."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hemingway, for saying that. I consider that you are granting me a very great privilege."

Alex wondered what he would say if he knew the whole truth. She despised herself for deceiving him, yet he had almost thrust his friendship and offer of help upon her. She had tried to hold herself aloof, to steer clear of such intimacies, to keep out of anything which would involve her in even the ties of affection which friendship brings in its train. She wished to live on the surface of things, to know people in a one-sided fashion, to enjoy their society and enter into their personal interests and daily pleasures, without letting them probe beneath the surface of her own. She felt that she must be free. This visit must not spoil her attitude towards the plan which she had carefully mapped out for herself. She never wished to tell anyone anything about her relations or her old friends, in case it might lead to the discovery of her true position. Intimate discussions might bring undesirable questions about her husband's people and his death. She had resolutely cut herself off from her old life and her old associates. Her father and stepmother knew no more than the fact that she had left her husband. She had advised them to let things alone, to keep the fact jealously to themselves, if they wished to guard the family name from scandal. This they did most effectively. She knew that so long as she left her stepmother free to enjoy her father's income and the ease which her marriage had given her, she was only too well pleased to forget that Alex and Tony existed.

But it is not so easy to live in the world and outside it at the same time. Ties of friendship, like family ties, can become fetters. Affection destroys liberty. Freedom is almost as impossible as perfect happiness. We are slaves to our affections and traditions.

Alex was beginning to dread even acquaintances. Hebe's golden kindness might soon become an iron fetter. Franklin Gibson's kindly, sentimental yet hard-headed American friendship would become another. Already she owed him honesty, and a clear statement of her position. He believed her to be one thing, while she was another.

CHAPTER IV

THERE is no fairer spot in all Britain on a fine summer's day than St. David's. The "village-city," as it is called, was founded by the national saint of Wales in 601. St. David, who, tradition avers, was the uncle of King Arthur, was the first Bishop of the cathedral, whose all-enduring Norman tower raises its head above the strange mingling of ancient and modern architecture which forms the unique and beautiful building. This square tower rises boldly out of a low green valley, the ancient land of Menevia, once a station of the Roman army and the port of the Romans for Ireland.

But St. David's, with all its unique beauty and romance, needs sunshine. Without sunshine the forget-me-nots in the watery meadows do not shine and attract the eye like a delicate carpet of blue. Without sunshine the white ducks in the stream look more real and less like a homely touch in a mediæval tapestry.

The sun was shining with all its might; every beauty that is St. David's, and all that is lent to it by the wonder of light, were in the landscape when Hebe McArthur and her Mercedes car full of tourists and good food drove up the village street.

The Americans were delighted with the village-city, which stands on a hill high above the meadows and the cathedral. There is a tradition in St. David's that a vision of our eternal home is to be seen by all true believers who look for it from the flight of stone steps which lead down through the churchyard to the cathedral.

Evangeline knew the legend attached to the steps, so with Tony's help she gouged out a bit of green turf, large enough to balance herself upon, and, shading her eyes, she looked into the distance; the vision can only be seen from a tuft of green sward.

"Can you see heaven?" Tony cried. "Oh, Auntie Evangeline, do let me try! Can you see God and all the heavenly angels?"

"Wait, Tony, wait!" Evangeline said. "I'll let you try in a minute! I can see *something*—it's becoming clearer!"

All the others had gone on; the child and the girl were left alone. Tony waited with growing impatience. Evangeline's eyes were looking into the distance; her feet were poised on the little green tuft.

"I can see the Isle of Avalon," she said, "quite clearly."

"And is that in heaven?" Tony asked.

"Very nearly, Tony," the girl said wistfully. "It's where Merlin's dear King Arthur lies buried. It's just across the blue sea, right away over there—further than you can see."

"Let me look for it," he cried excitedly. "I want to see the Islands of the Blessed! I do want to see heaven!"

Evangeline stepped from the tuft and placed Tony on it. "Now, look hard," she said, "look very, very hard, and think, Tony, think of what you want to see."

Tony did as he was told. His blue eyes pierced the clear distance.

For a minute or two Evangeline waited, lost in thought.

"Oh, I see the wee Child Jesus!" he cried. "He is floating in the clouds. He's coming down, Auntie Evangeline, He's all shining and bright! Oh, He's so booful!"

"How lovely, Tony! What is He like?"

"Same isackly as the Baby Jesus in the Mission Chapel at home, the Jesus who only comes out on my birfday."

Tony had been born on a local saint's day in Canada, a day on which a grand wax figure of the Child Jesus was always exhibited on the high altar of the Mission Chapel. The miraculous power of healing feeble children was attributed to the image. Tony adored it.

"O tres doux Jesus," he said, *"vrai Fils de Marie, je T'adore!"* The words came spontaneously. He was back in the beloved chapel. He crossed himself devoutly.

Evangeline waited for a moment. Evidently the vision was becoming less clear to the child; his expression was changing. It was less ecstatic.

"Come, Tony, or we shall be lost," Evangeline said. "Mummy is far ahead."

The child did as he was told, and as he hurried he put his soft little hand in Evangeline's.

"Perhaps St. David's is going to be like heaven," he said. "London wasn't. What do you think, Auntie Evangeline?"

"I think it is, Tony. And do you know, I agree with you—I don't like London."

"I think Tenby and the sands p'raps is heaven?" he said thoughtfully. They had driven through Tenby on their way to St. David's.

"Would you like to stay in Tenby, Tony, and play on the golden sands for lots and lots of days?"

The child looked up pleadingly. His eyes saw visions.

"But could we, Auntie Evangeline? Have you any money? Is Tenby s'pensive?"

"Yes, Tony, I have some money."

"And may you spend it like that? Can you go to the seashore if you like?"

"Yes, Tony, only I don't like to go without you."

"Oh, Auntie Evangeline, mayn't we go, really and truly?"

"I want to build castles and play at Robinson Crusoe, and that's not any fun all alone."

"And you haven't got any lickle boy like me, Auntie Evangeline?"

"No, I've no little boy."

"If you've money, can't you get one in London? Mummy said she could, p'raps."

"No, Tony, you can't buy little boys. God sends them to nice good people like your mummy."

"I'll pray to Jesus, Auntie Evangeline. I'll ask the Blessed Virgin and she will tell God that you want a little boy to play with, that you haven't any Tony."

"And Auntie Evangeline will take Tony to Tenby, and let him play on the sands, and bathe in the sea, and ride on donkeys and go in a fishing-boat, and walk far out into the sea on the iron pier."

"And play with the little children, all of them, Auntie? The dirty ones too?"

"Yes, Tony, if mummy will let you come with me."

"Can't mummy come too?" For one moment he had forgotten Alex.

"I expect she will be too busy."

"I 'spect so too," he said, wisely and sadly. "We're awfully busy in London, mummy and me. See, Auntie Evangeline, I've got to be her big man and her little boy as well."

"Do you remember your daddy, Tony?"

Tony nodded his head.

"Do you remember when he died?"

"Daddy just went away and never camed back. Mummy 'spects a big wild bear killed him. Daddy was trying to shoot big, big bears and things, to sell for mummy and me, to get money for us."

Evangeline felt a little guilty. In a manner she knew that she was questioning the child from a point of curiosity. Alex's reticence on the subject of her husband had made her, for no reason that she could explain, just a little interested in his death. Tony had stated a bald fact; his father had "gone away and never comed back." This set her thinking.

When they joined the rest of the party, Tony, of course, had to confide to his mother the promise which Evangeline had made to take him to Tenby. He was so bubbling over with it that the solemnity and beauty of the great building did not subdue his enthusiasm. Even his vision of the Child Jesus was obliterated. The prospect of playing on the long stretch of sands, covered with little boys and girls of his own age, was a thing too wonderful to allow of anything else. Alex, to relieve Evangeline, carried him off to show him the one feature which she remembered quite clearly about the inside of the building.

"Come, little son," she said, "you and I will find something funny all for ourselves—three bunny-rabbits with only three ears between them. They have only one ear each, poor things!"

"True, mummy—not foxing?" Tony put his usual brief question when he was incredulous of Alex's promises.

"Come along and let's look for them, and you will see. I think I know where to find them."

She led him to the canopied seats of the clergy behind the stalls of the choristers. In passing them, she tipped up one or two of the *misereres* and showed the child the quaint carvings of beasts and birds which were hidden when the seats were down.

"Aren't they funny, mummy? And in church, too!"

"These tiny seats," Alex said, "were all the poor old padres were allowed to sit on during the service. Watch and you'll see what happened if one of them went to sleep while the sermon was being preached, if he did not sit upright all the time."

Alex seated herself on the narrow ledge of one of the *misereres*,

and then doubled herself forward as though she was asleep. The next second she had fallen forward and slipped off the seat. A childish peal of laughter came from the delighted Tony.

"Oh, mummy, I forgot I was in church, but St. David's isn't one bit like our dear lickle Mission Chapel! It has no pictures on the walls. Where are the three rabbits, mummy?"

Alex looked on one of the stone pillars behind the monks' stalls and found the rabbits, so interlaced that three ears did for the three of them.

Tony wanted to laugh again, so he put his hand to his mouth. His voice was hushed and reverent while he talked in whispers about them to Alex.

Franklin Gibson joined them at that moment. Tony was so amused with the one-eared bunnies that he had to show them to the American, who was in a state of emotional enthusiasm over the peculiar beauty of the building. The gorgeous portal had held him spellbound. The party had left him there, and each one of them had wandered through the building according to their different inclinations. Through roofless chapels and the restored nave, on to the ancient pilgrimage tomb of St. David or the more ornate and beautiful one of Bishop Gower.

"Isn't this the most bewildering mass of ancient and modern you ever saw, Mrs. Hemingway?" he said impulsively. "The restored portion is so complete, so splendidly done, that I am amazed, I may say horrified, to see these chapels, full of the most priceless heritages, left roofless and open to the wild winds and rains of Wales! Is Wales so dead to the value of her historical treasures that these chapels can remain in that state? Where is all the money of Cardiff? I've been looking for the tomb of Geraldus Cambrensis, the famous chronicler. He was a nephew of St. David. It is he, I believe, who has really told us what is best worth believing of the local history of his day."

"Let us come and look for it. But first please do look at Tony's particular find—the three rabbits with only three ears between them. Aren't they delicious?"

"One of the countless odd forms of the Trinity, I suppose," the American said. "The great builders loved introducing the Trinity whenever and wherever they could, at one particular period of the Church's evolution."

"Oh, of course!" Alex said. "How stupid of me—I never

thought of that." She smiled. "I thought it really was just a touch of cleverness and humour put in to amuse the poor bored monks. These carvings are so human and so funny."

Franklin Gibson looked at the quaint carvings. "They are delicious," he said, "but I fancy every touch of humour had its meaning. In the Middle Ages religion was strangely mingled with humour—morality plays show us that."

They left the choir and went in search of the tomb of Geraldus Cambrensis. They went slowly. Alex was surprised and impressed by her companion's knowledge of architecture and ecclesiastical archæology.

The American was not in the least prosy or boring to Alex, who had been for so long cut off from any sort of intellectual companionship that she found him stimulating and extremely interesting. Evangeline had described him as "temperamentally ponderous." There was a soupçon of truth in her criticism to anyone of her own mercurial temperament, for Evangeline was impatient of anything and anyone who could not think and act and live at the pace she did. To-day she was behaving as though she had just emerged from a convent.

They had added to their party when they arrived in St. David's, a good-looking young curate, to whom they had brought an introduction from the clergyman at Tregaron. He had volunteered to act as cicerone to the cathedral, but Hebe so far had been his sole audience. It was by no fault of his own that he was a curate; he would have made a very much better sports' master at a public school. He had been telling the idle Hebe all about the cathedral, while his senses and imagination had been running headlong after the girl with the heavenly blue eyes. He wanted to walk with her over the cliffs and away to the sea, to the high headland, whose six hundred feet of sea-battered rock looked across the water to freedom and the outer world.

Little wonder that Hebe summed the youth up as tiresome and lifeless. She hurried to join the others.

"I want my tea," she said. "I vote we women leave these two men to examine every ancient stone and bit of carving while we go off to the palace ruins and make tea."

Tony hailed the idea with delight.

Three-quarters of an hour later the whole party had assembled

on the green lawn which is surrounded by the glorious ruins of the Bishop's Palace, to enjoy the excellent tea which Hebe had provided.

"Mrs. McArthur," the American said, "I have just discovered that there is a service in Welsh in the cathedral every Sunday afternoon."

"Well," Hebe said laughingly, "and you want the car to drive you over for it—is that so?"

"Oh, do let's go to it!" Evangeline said. "I'd love to hear real Welsh singing. Do they sing well?" She asked the curate the question.

"Oh, do anything you like," Hebe said, "only enjoy yourselves."

"The singing is very good, I believe," Franklin Gibson said, as he turned to the curate, who was covertly gazing at Evangeline while he devoured egg-and-cress sandwiches.

"The Welsh are a very musical race," he said, "and in their own language their singing is at its best. I think you'd enjoy the service."

"We'll come next Sunday," Hebe said.

The curate instantly visualized his five days of uncongenial toil ending in a Sunday of trumpets. Next Sunday would have but one meaning now for him—the coming to St. David's of this girl with the wild, dark hair and the eyes of heavenly blue, eyes which made him feel funny all over," as Tony would have said, when they looked sympathetically into his.

An enormous supply of sandwiches and cakes and delicately-cut bread and butter was demolished by the healthy, hungry sightseers. The curate began to think that he could almost endure his life at St. David's if the summer brought such pleasant interludes, such charming tourists to see its ruins.

Evangeline's good mood was petering out; the imp of mischief was seated on her shoulder, whispering in her ear. She had come out to play. Why not amuse herself and see what was left of the old Adam in the new curate? Her "come hither" look carried him off as she strayed from the tea-party. They roamed over the ruins together, and far beyond the ruins. Their youth and their leaping senses carried their feet down into the green meadows and across the stream, where the ducks, which punctuated the verdant landscape with patches of shining white,

were standing on their heads in an ecstasy of gluttony. The curate and the girl from Acadie looked at the ducks for a little time. Then their eyes met.

"Such fun!" Evangeline said. "Don't you wish humans could do it, such an ecstasy of satisfaction?"

The curate did not answer her. He was very nearly standing on his head as it was. Summer and its harvest of beauty was surrounding the girl. She was a thing of flaming life and vitality. He hated his black coat and his profession of repression.

"St. David's is adorable," Evangeline said, "a lyric landscape, don't you think so? It is as romantic as Glastonbury in its own way. There is a Celtic note of tragedy in its gayest mood."

Still the curate did not speak. Why had this girl come into the heart of summer, to flame it almost to madness? Why had she come, only to go away again?

She looked at him quickly. "You hate it?" she said.

He tossed a small pebble at the vertical tail of a duck.

"You hate and detest it?"

He did not deny it; his silence confessed it. Because she would be gone so soon, he wanted to tell her that it stifled and suffocated him—not St. David's itself, but the life which he had to live in it, the things he had to pretend, the things he had to profess.

They were wandering now through undivided, green feeding-lands. One meadow was covered with blue forget-me-nots.

"I'm going to gather some of these forget-me-nots and make a wreath," Evangeline said, "like I used to do in Grand Pré." She felt with her keen senses that he admired the flowers.

She laughed, for the curate was grave, and although his gravity was a part of her pleasure, it had to be changed to frivolity.

"Did you ever make a forget-me-not wreath, on a willow-stick bent into a hoop?" she asked demurely.

"Never," he said, "but I can learn. I should like to."

"You choose a bendy piece of willow and make it into a hoop. Join it very securely, and then make your forget-me-nots into little bunches and fasten them on to it. Tie them

on as closely and as neatly as you can. Then put the wreath into a saucer of water and leave it. You don't know how lovely it will look in two or three days. The flowers grow straight up and all the buds come out. You must give it plenty of water, of course. They will send out roots in time. I used to plant mine when the roots got pretty long."

They began picking the flowers as eagerly as children.

"Tony will love to help us," Evangeline said.

"Is that jolly little chap your sister's boy?"

"Oh, no," Evangeline said. "I'm only an aunt because he likes me. I tell him fairy-stories. We are a delightful party—no relations to each other."

"Does that make up your idea of a delightful party?"

"My mamma's at home to-day," Evangeline said reflectively. "It was rather too far for her. I never mind her. But don't you think relations do get a little stifling? Isn't it nice to know that they are all quite well, and that you are well away from them?"

The curate laughed. "I can never get away from mine," he said. "I have a mother and an invalid sister living here."

"And so that's why you are a curate?" Evangeline said the words before she realized that they were spoken.

They were both stooping down; their hands were full of flowers. When they raised their heads their eyes met; Evangeline's blue ones got the rebuke they deserved.

"I've never been called upon to do anything I didn't want to do," she said. "I've always done what I liked—not *got* what I wanted, mind you, but done what I wanted. I wonder how I should behave if I . . ." She paused.

"If you were in my place?" he said. The words were drawn from him as the hasty words had been drawn from Evangeline.

"Yes," Evangeline said.

"The yoke of affection fits very tightly. If you shake it off, it leaves an exposed scar; it's better to wear it. You would find it so. You can obliterate self, castigate desires."

"I wonder if I should? I wonder?" Evangeline said. She had suddenly become serious. Into her midsummer play time had floated from the blue overhead this poor little human tragedy. She was certain that the good-looking curate was miserably ill-fitted for his ministerial work, that his life in this

remote village was a living death to him. He would be happier dead, and yet he had to live because of his mother and sister, who were probably of no earthly good to anyone. Her worship of human freedom, her passion for life at its fullest, made her shiver, as she thought of the sacrifices inflicted by the yoke of affection.

"I think we must go back to the ruins," she said; her voice was flat and depressed. "We can make the wreath there—I'm not sure how long we have before we start for Tregaron."

"I should like to see it finished," he said.

"Then let's hurry."

His youth had been hurrying him all the afternoon; it had been carrying him at a breakneck pace over dangerous ground.

"Let's run," Evangeline said. And they ran over the meadows, as she had often run in the valley of Grand Pré, back to the arched wall of the ruin, with its sentiment of ancient splendour. The interlacing of its high clear arches looked like lace work held up against a blue sky.

As they ran, Evangeline felt that in the space of an hour or so she had drawn very near to intimacy with this curate. She knew that they were not strangers any longer. She knew that his isolation would be more unbearable than ever when Hebe's car carried her guests back to Tregaron Manor. In an indescribable manner, she felt that their intercourse would not be confined to this casual meeting.

When they rejoined the party, who were still resting under the shelter of the arched wall, Hebe gave Evangeline a knowing look. Her eyes spoke so plainly that Evangeline could almost hear her soft intonation: "You naghty gurl!" Hebe always pronounced girl as though it was spelt *gurl,* and naughty as though it was spelt *naghty.*

Tony rushed to Evangeline when he saw the forget-me-nots in her hands.

"Come, Tony, and help us make a wreath," she said. "We haven't much time." She threw herself down on the grass and began her work. The curate and Tony placed themselves one on each side of her.

"Oh," she said, "how are we going to get any thread or string? We can't make it without."

Hebe came to the rescue. All the dainty packages for tea

had been tied up with fine white twine. These pieces she collected and handed to the curate, whose business it was to unpick the knots. Tony was instructed by Evangeline how to put the little bunches of flowers neatly together. The trio made a pretty summer picture.

The American's eyes strayed to it while he talked to Hebe. Alex Hemingway had consented to lie down and rest in a secluded corner. Franklin Gibson had made a soft couch for her with the wraps and cushions from the motor-car.

"Isn't youth a wonderful thing?" he said to Hebe. "Miss Sarsfield, Tony and the curate—how naturally they have foregathered. I fancy that young man is having the day of his life, poor fellow!"

"Evangeline is a born flirt," Hebe said. "She simply can't resist attracting every male thing that crosses her path."

"That's just it—it's a thrilling game. She's probably just learnt it, just discovered how to play her cards to the best advantage. Who can blame her?"

"Her eyes are like lamps to a moth," Hebe said. "That poor curate is singeing his wings, or I'm mistaken. And Evangeline will drive away this afternoon and leave not a pang behind her. She *is* a naghty gurl."

"It's the delicious game of youth, Mrs. McArthur, the finest game in the world. It won't last for very long. I must say I love to see it. I can't be hard on anyone who enjoys playing it."

"And don't you ever get your own wings singed?" Hebe asked maliciously.

"Why, yes—just a little—only at the tips—but that is a sort of exquisite pain all we moths enjoy. We haven't rightly experienced the various phases of life if we haven't felt that particular pain. That young lady's own time will come—someone will play with her as she is playing with the curate, as she plays with every foolish moth that drifts to her lamp, or I'm much mistaken."

"Someone has already singed her, I think," Hebe said.

"You don't say so? Has the girl suffered?" Franklin Gibson's voice was tragic; the idea wounded his sensibilities. He knew that tragedy had to come into the girl's book of life, and yet he resented it.

"I fancy so," Hebe said. "She is, in a way, a different gurl since we met on the *Andalusia.*"

"What sort of fellow could he have been?" Franklin Gibson said, meditatively. "Just look at her, fixing up that forget-me-not wreath, as neatly and nimbly as a young Proserpine! Whoever in the world could have played with her heart and gotten away with his own quite whole?"

"I don't know," Hebe said, "but that's my conviction. She's really harder and more wounded in a way than Alex Hemingway."

"My," he said, "but that's a great soul, that's a fine woman! Every day I feel that more and more, Mrs. McArthur."

"So you still want to restore her?" Hebe looked into the American's eyes. Something like a blush mounted to his forehead, but he did not answer her as frankly as he had done a week ago. He evaded the question by making a statement.

"Only a very fine man could have won her love. I don't suppose any other man will ever be permitted to fill his place in her thoughts or in her life."

"I wonder?" Hebe said. "She is so reserved, it is so impossible to get nearer to her. I sometimes think she's afraid."

"Of what, Mrs. McArthur?"

"Of anyone becoming really intimate with her, of any attempt on our part to know more about her than we know at present."

"What don't you know?" He spoke almost resentfully, yet Hebe was only expressing his own feelings.

"I don't know anything about her, except the fact that I met her as she now is, with Tony, on board the *Andalusia,* crossing the Atlantic. I liked her and invited her to visit me."

At that moment Evangeline held up the completed wreath.

"Come and let me see it," Hebe said. "It looks lovely."

Evangeline brought the wreath, with Tony hurrying beside her, and the curate hanging behind.

"It's just exquisite," Hebe said. "How dainty and fresh!"

"It will be far prettier when it has been in water," Evangeline said. "Tony thinks it is a crown for the Queen of the Fairies. But do you know what we are going to do with it? Put it on St. David's tomb in memory of King Arthur, because St. David was his uncle, and I adore King Arthur and so does Tony."

"And will you please give us a saucer, Mrs. 'Carthur?" Tony said. "We want one to fill with water."

Hebe laughed. "Guess I'll have to. Take one, Evangeline, out of the tea-basket. They never expect to be refused anything." She turned to Franklin Gibson. "Spoilt things, aren't they?"

The curate got the saucer and again the trio started off to fill it with water and take the wreath to the cathedral, to place it on St. David's tomb.

"We shall be able to see how tall it has grown, Tony, on Sunday, when we come to the Welsh service. It ought to be ever so high."

They had to hurry, because Hebe had only given them another twenty minutes. When the bright blue wreath was placed on the slab which covers the grave of the great Welsh saint, Evangeline stood looking at it for a moment—but only a moment—lost in her memory of the day when she had placed a bunch of violets on the tomb of the saint's nephew in Glastonbury. The one tomb is authentic, while the other is probably but legendary, but to Evangeline both were indisputable facts.

Her thoughts isolated her for the moment. Why on earth did she go on caring for and thinking about Allan Fairclough? Even this curate was quite as nice, and no doubt much more interesting. He had told her things which suggested that he had opinions and views of his own. To be a curate was to Evangeline a damning thing, but apparently he could not help it. What annoyed her was that, in her innermost soul, she knew that she would have given anything to have been able to put Allan in his place at the moment. She had to own that the curate was very good-looking—quite handsome in fact, in spite of his cloth. He was speaking to her now.

"I will put a little water in the saucer if it gets dried up, so that you will find the wreath fresh on Sunday."

Evangeline's blue eyes thanked him more sweetly than they need have done, and only Tony chattered as they hurried back to the waiting party. Alex had to be waked from a delightful sleep. Hebe had told Franklin Gibson to come with her and look at her, as she lay, with all the lines and weariness banished from her pale face, youth and its softness restored to it.

As Franklin Gibson looked down on the sleeping woman,

whose eyelids were closed with a child-like innocence of expression, he said quietly:

"That's what life has got to give her back, Mrs. McArthur. I somehow knew she could look like that. My goodness! just to think of it—that you and I have more money than we need or can rightly spend, and that poor girl, for she is little more than a girl—I can see that now—is worn to a shadow for want of proper nourishment and rest! Don't it make you soul-sick?"

"Do you know, you are in love with her poverty?" Hebe said.

"St. Francis' dear Lady of Poverty! He was in love with her, right enough, wasn't he?"

"If Alex Hemingway was as rich as I am you wouldn't feel nearly so interested in her, would you now?"

"That's so," he said. "It's the tragedy of her poverty, the romance of it, and her youth, that's to me very attractive—leastways, I suppose it's that."

Hebe took Alex's hand in hers and Franklin Gibson turned away. He felt that he had no right to see the girl emerge from the ideal to the real. He had spied upon the sacredness of sleep, that miracle which gives us forgetfulness.

CHAPTER V

On the Wednesday night after their second visit to St. David's, when a sudden call to administer Communion to a dying parishioner in a mountain village had deprived the curate of the pleasure he had anticipated, the Tregaron house-party all dressed up. Hebe McArthur's maid had ingeniously created the dresses. The wearers of them were only allowed to see their own; all the others were to be a surprise for the dressing-up night. Franklin Gibson had undertaken to get his own costume; he had sent to London for it.

When the gong sounded for dinner on the eventful night, Alex rather nervously left her room and went downstairs. She had felt more than a little pleased with her reflection in her long mirror. Her thoughts were so entirely centred on her own costume, and her unmistakable likeness in it to the great Caroline Pontifex, that she was startled at the sight of a strange figure which was slowly descending the stair in front of her. It was the figure of a begging friar, in a tattered and threadbare brown Franciscan habit. His bare feet were sandalled, according to the regulations of his order of poverty. His hair and beard looked unkempt and scornful of personal care.

Alex gave a cry of astonishment. The monk turned and, seeing her, he came back up the stair. As he did so, he rattled a little tin can, like an iron pepper-pot, which he held out to her for alms.

"*Per la carità, Signora,*" he muttered, "*per la carità.*"

Alex laughed, for the voice of the friar brought her back to reality, to the game they were all going to play; she remembered why she had dressed up. As she laughed, Franklin Gibson raised his eyes and looked at her, and, just as she had done one moment before, he started back. Surely this was the living Lady Caroline Pontifex?

"Illustrious Signora," he said, "I am but a humble friar, of the Order of Our Lady of Poverty. You are indeed the

great Lady Caroline Pontifex. By the love of Christ, I beg of your bounty, for the children, Signora, I implore of your charity, of your great wealth!"

Alex quickly unfastened a gold chain from her neck. Attached to it was a little heart covered with small pearls. She dropped the heart into the friar's outstretched hand.

"I have lands and fine clothes, good friar," she said, "but of money I have none. Take this, my last jewel, and for the love of our sweet Mother, pray for the soul of Caroline Pontifex."

"Illustrious Signora, what gift could be more precious, what token of your charity, which is love, more beautiful? I desire, as our beloved saint desired, that God may fill our hearts with love for the noble treasure of holy poverty. It is that heavenly virtue by which all earthly and passing things are trodden underfoot."

The friar stood aside and Alex continued her dignified descent of the wide staircase. She had felt great and wonderful before she had met him, in her beautiful eighteenth-century gown. She had felt how good it would be to live as mistress of this fine old house, to be smiled benignly down upon day by day by periwigged gentlemen, who had ever an eye for elegance in women, or to answer back with equal disdain the supercilious glances of the women, who one and all of them seemed to have inherited the arrogance of the first Caroline Pontifex. She had felt their appraisement of her cheap little gowns. Now, with the beautiful words of St. Francis ringing in her ears, she did not care, for she could claim kinship with his humble Order of Poverty.

When she reached the drawing-room, where Hebe and Evangeline and Mrs. Sarsfield were assembled, and the butler announced her as "Lady Caroline Pontifex," there was a flattering silence, for Alex was to the very life the *grande dame* of Peter Lely's picture. Her likeness, as she entered the room, to the haughty Caroline, was ridiculous. As she swept in, Hebe and Evangeline looked and felt "dressed-up"; Alex was the real thing, the actual woman.

Hebe McArthur, who looked very sumptuous as a Spanish woman, shook hands with Alex almost shyly, and introduced

her to Amy Robsart (Mrs. Sarsfield). Caroline Pontifex smiled graciously as she held out both her hands to the exquisite Amy.

"My maternal ancestors lived near to Cumnor Place," she said. "I have many times as a child come down the very stair at the foot of which you were found lying with your neck cut. I hope the wound has healed, that it has left no scar. You had a beautiful neck, I was told."

The shy Amy blushed becomingly. "Thank you, madam," she said. "I only feel a little rheumatism in it when the weather is damp or frosty. I am glad to say that the scar has almost entirely disappeared. Time, the great healer, has been kind."

When Hebe next introduced the beautiful Emma Hart to Lady Caroline Pontifex, she bent her head but slightly as she looked at the radiant figure in front of her. She did not offer the tragic Emma even one hand, far less two. Instead, her cold eyes scanned the bacchante, from her bare white arms and hanging goat's skin to her vine-wreathed hair. Then, without a word, she turned her eyes slowly from the bacchante to her hostess.

"A very decent family called Hart used to live on an estate belonging to my uncle in Cheshire," she said *sotto voce.* "I heard that one of the daughters drifted up to London. She became some painter's model, and later on Lady Hamilton. As a foreigner, my dear, in this country, of course you cannot be expected to know all these things, but really, one does not expect to meet a creature like that in your house! I feel it is my duty to warn you—this Emma Hart and the adventuress Lady Hamilton are one and the same person."

"You surprise me, Lady Caroline, for I was introduced to Lady Hamilton when she was Emma Hart by Mr. Greville; and he belongs to one of your fine English families, does he not? He is a gentleman, I believe? She was visiting in his house with her mother, in St. John's Wood in London. She presided at his tea-table very prettily, I thought. She was called, by the company who went there, 'the fair tea-maker of St. John's Wood.' "

"There have been many fair things housed in St. John's Wood, my dear," Lady Caroline said, "things which one does not expect to find in Tregaron Manor. Mr. Greville took a liberty when he introduced you to Emma Hart."

"And so I must apologise to you, Lady Caroline?"

"As you are a stranger in this country I will overlook your mistake. But I must tell you that she is not a fit associate for poor Amy Robsart."

"Brother Leo of Perugia," the butler announced in a loud, formal voice.

As Lady Caroline turned her eyes to the door, she said, with a slight shrug of her shoulders:

"What a Catholic gathering! The poor soul evidently has the kindest intentions, but I must refuse to sit next to bare feet in a drawing-room and at dinner. One really must draw the line somewhere!"

"You are welcome, Brother Leo," Hebe said. "Pray come in, and talk to my beautiful Lady Hamilton." His hostess, with her black lace mantilla and high tortoiseshell comb, greeted Brother Leo warmly. "I have offended Lady Caroline Pontifex by asking her to meet her," she whispered. "I feel sorry for the beautiful Emma, who, I am sure, has a sweet nature."

"Sister Hebe," Brother Leo said thoughtfully, "verily we are all brothers and sisters, having all one Creator. As sinners we can fast and pray and weep and mortify the flesh, but there is one thing we cannot do, be faithful to Our Lord. The Lady Caroline Pontifex let her worldly pride govern her generous heart. I would rather that you introduced me to the Lady Caroline, for with her will I talk of my brother St. Francis, and of how he counselled us, as we spoke peace with our voices, to bear it in a greater measure in our hearts. I will tell her how often the blessed saint reminded us that many seem to us children of the devil who shall one day follow Christ."

Hebe led the friar up to Lady Caroline. "Brother Leo of Perugia," she said, "and I hope, Lady Caroline, that the blessing of his conversation will atone for my former act of ignorance."

"We have met before," Lady Caroline said, as she bowed to the friar, "but I was then unaware that you were indeed the famous Brother Leo of Perugia, the beloved companion of the great St. Francis himself. You acted as his secretary, I believe?"

"I had the great privilege of writing down the words of the blessed saint, madam. The greater part of the *Mirror of Per-*

fection I wrote to his dictation. I was called by our beloved saint, 'the little sheep of God.' That was my privilege."

"St. Francis was always a favourite of mine," Caroline Pontifex said haughtily, "but I do wish he had not been so dirty. I don't like your bare feet, Brother Leo; now, would wearing stockings make you any less pious, less godly? In this country bare feet get very dirty."

"St. Francis ever prayed that God would fill our hearts with love for the noble treasure of poverty."

"A very easily-acquired treasure, Brother Leo. Personally I see no merit in it, or sin in riches. I care not for those who ape humility; it is often to cover a pride which is a most un-Christian virtue, especially amongst the wealthy. Your blessed St. Francis had always a comfortable home to go back to, if I recollect rightly. His was a voluntary poverty, which is scarcely the real thing, or so I think. It is possible to endure almost anything, if it is a free-will offering, an act of devotion."

"I beg of your understanding, Lady Caroline—our beloved saint admonished us that we should judge no man, nor despise such as live delicately and go clad in gay and sumptuous raiment. For God is their Lord, too, and He can call them to Himself, and can justify whom He has called."

Caroline Pontifex threw open her fan. "Then pray tell me, Brother Leo, why He doesn't do it at once and be done with it all? That's what I never can understand. Ah, there!" she cried, "there is the famous Admiral Fairfax as I knew him when he was a child. This is a pleasant surprise, indeed!"

The door had been thrown open to admit "The Honourable Reginald Fairfax."

Tony made an elaborate bow to the assembled company and walked, like a young lord, across the long room to pay his respects to his lace-mantilla'd hostess. As he played the part which Alex had taught him, with a childish dignity, all eyes were turned on him. Alex, for the moment, forgot that she was the cold-eyed Lady Caroline. Seeing this, and the mother-pride in her eyes, Brother Leo said, in Franklin Gibson's most native intonation:

"My, Mrs. Hemingway, he's stunning! Ain't you very proud of him? He's the real thing, and no mistake about it."

Alex's eyes, as she answered him, were beautifully tender

and appreciative of his admiration. She was still the mother; Lady Caroline was forgotten. Dressed up in the fine apparel of the eighteenth century, she had to admit that her son was "the real thing."

"I perceive," she said, as Tony was carried off by Hebe to be introduced to Amy Robsart, "that Brother Leo still has a warm corner in his heart for the things of the flesh, for the fine feathers which make fine birds."

"Your boy, Mrs. Hemingway, is a mighty fine bird in his plainest feathers. These gay garments only prove that he's a chip of the old block. They are another proof of that one English thing which we Americans can't achieve."

Alex Hemingway became Caroline Pontifex again; Brother Leo had become the old inquisitor Franklin Gibson, her American admirer.

"I hope our hostess will not introduce the lad to that bold Hart girl," she said arrogantly. "What eyes she is making at the child! Or is it at you, Brother Leo? I rather think it is—the brazen hussy will not even respect your habit. It will prove no protection to you from her languishments. You may call her Lady Hamilton, if you like—in that costume she is Emma Hart, and to me she will remain Emma Hart, Greville's mistress, the daughter of a Cheshire washer-woman."

"Dinner is served, madam."

The butler announced the words with a formality and dignity worthy of a conclave of cardinals. His total oblivion of the absurdity and unusualness of the gathering filled Evangeline's soul with joy.

Tony had at once recognized that Evangeline was the picture of the girl with the goatskin and the laughing face which hung in the long gallery. But he was greatly puzzled to know why anyone called Lady Hamilton could have worn a rough goatskin for a dress, and left her neck and shoulders uncovered all day long. The only "Lady" Tony had ever heard of was the elegantly gowned Caroline Pontifex. All the way to the dining-room Evangeline had to explain to him what a bacchante was and why a great and famous lady had dressed like one.

"She was just dressed up, like we are, Tony," Evangeline said, "and somebody painted her because she was so beautiful."

"And will somebody paint you, Auntie Evangeline?"

"I'm afraid not, Tony. But we are breaking rules, you and I. We are not playing the game—talking like this is forbidden. We aren't allowed to be our real selves until dessert is on the table. We've got to pretend that you are the Honourable Reginald Fairfax and that I am Lady Hamilton. You must be very grand and I must be very nervous about my table-manners."

"And is that old man with the bare feet and grey beard really and truly Mr. Gibson?" The child's voice was incredulous.

"Yes, really and truly. But he also is Brother Leo until dessert—until he is eating grapes and chocolates, and merry with good cheer."

"But who was Brother Leo?"

"A great friend of St. Francis of Assisi. Have you ever heard of anyone called St. Francis, Tony?"

Tony gave a cry of happiness. "Oh, Auntie Evangeline, the very same St. Francis who spoke to the little birds and the fishes and flowers, just like Bartholomew does when we walk in the woods? In the Mission Chapel there is a big picture of St. Francis preaching to the fishes." The Honourable Reginald Fairfax was very much the little Tony beloved by Bartholomew.

"Well, Brother Leo was one of St. Francis' dearest friends, Tony. You must talk to him after dinner and hear all he has to tell you about the blessed saint and his home on the hillside at Assisi."

Tony became lost in childish memories of his own distant home. During dinner he was very shy, and rather in awe of the mixed company, which indeed made an odd assemblage.

It was after dinner that the real fun for him began, for Hebe, seeing that he was not thoroughly understanding the situation, which was rather a complicated one for his childish mind to grasp, suggested a game of hide-and-seek before he went to bed.

"But we must go down to the hall to play it," she said. "We can hide in all the downstairs rooms. I'm afraid of these things," her eyes indicated the treasures in the drawing-room.

When lots were drawn, it fell to Brother Leo to hide first. Very soon he was discovered by Tony—through the aid of an extended foot and a gentle raising of the lid of a long oak chest in the outer hall, into which he had squeezed himself. When it was Tony's turn to hide, he begged Lady Hamilton to help

him find a good place—he had been very faithful to her all the evening—so they went off together, leaving the others in the hall.

Presently Evangeline returned to them and said, "Has Tony come back here? Have you seen him? Where has he disappeared to?"

"No, he isn't here. Haven't you hidden him yet?"

Evangeline looked surprised. She shook her head.

"Has he given you the slip?" Hebe asked.

"Sharp youngster," Brother Leo said, "getting you to help him and then hoodwinking you in that fashion!"

"Well, I've certainly lost him," Evangeline said, "and as time's up, we'd better start looking for him, hadn't we?"

In her heart she wondered where on earth the child could have hidden himself. He had not been alone for more than two minutes.

"No, there's half a minute more," Brother Leo said; he was looking at the clock.

Lady Caroline Pontifex was standing below her own portrait. Brother Leo had been lost in admiration and wonder at her striking resemblance to it. Could it be mere chance? Or was there anything in it which he did not know? Alex felt his searching gaze. Lady Caroline's coldest expression met his inquisitive eyes.

"Time's up!" Evangeline said.

They all hurried off in mock anxiety to look for Tony. Finding himself by Alex's side, Brother Leo whispered:

"Lady Caroline, this was a dangerous game to play. I'm surprised at your consenting."

"And why, Brother Leo? May I ask the reason for your strange remark?" Alex was the arrogant Lady Caroline.

"If you mean to keep your secret, I shall keep mine. But dressing up is a dangerous game where family characteristics are so strongly marked."

Caroline Pontifex threw open her fan. "Brother Leo," she said,

"'No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.'"

"That's right," he said. "I guess the risk just urged you to do it. I only hope there will be no mishap, Mrs. Hemingway."

"The Honourable Reginald Fairfax is waiting for us to find him," Lady Caroline said. "I fear our conversation must for the moment be postponed."

Pretending to be really serious, as grown-ups do when they are looking for a little child, they all went their different ways in search of Tony. At first the seeking was make-believe, for his hiding must not end too quickly. But very soon, however, it became evident that Tony had hidden himself so cleverly that it was a case of seeking in real earnest. The game became real. Every downstairs room was thoroughly searched, but no Tony was to be found. The incongruous figures went this way and that, looking in every likely corner and place, but no proud Tony was discovered.

At last the mother in Caroline Pontifex came to the surface. She was just a little uneasy. Could he, she asked Hebe, have gone into the kitchen quarters?

Hebe enquired, but he had not been seen by any of the servants.

The minutes flew past, and still no Tony was discovered. He certainly had hoodwinked Evangeline. He was usually very impatient of hiding; it was always difficult to make him wait for more than a second or two while they were looking for him.

"Tony!" Alex cried loudly. "Where are you?"

The child did not answer her call.

"Where are you, Tony? Time's up! No one may hide for more than ten minutes. Do come out, Tony!"

Still there was no answer.

Brother Leo next called the child in a much louder voice.

The little rascal still kept them waiting.

"The Honourable Reginald Fairfax is wanted," Hebe drawled out; "he must come forth at once, or the box of chocolates which awaits him will be handed over to Lady Hamilton. Evangeline!" she cried, "come and fetch your prize, and let's eat them all up!"

Again there was silence, and in the silence there was an

atmosphere of suspicion. They looked at each other questioningly. Hebe felt a chill run down her back; she shivered.

"Where can he have been spirited off to?" she said. "It is quite uncanny. I do wish he would come!"

"Where did you leave him, Evangeline?" Alex asked. Her voice was strained. She was anxious; it was foolish of her to show it, but she was conscious of the anxiety their faces expressed.

"In the library," Evangeline said. "I went into the library with him, but there wasn't any good place to hide there, and I suddenly thought of a splendid place in the outer hall between the green baize door and the glass one. I went out of the library thinking that he was following close behind me. When I turned to speak to him, I found that he wasn't there. I supposed he hadn't heard me tell him to come. I called to him, and when I got no answer I went back to the library. He wasn't there; it was empty. He had simply disappeared, just as if the walls had opened and gobbled him up."

A cry startled them. It came from Lady Caroline Pontifex, who had paled at Evangeline's words. Beneath her grand gown her heart stood still. The next instant she turned from the group and fled to the library. Her cry still echoed in their ears as they gazed at each other in surprise.

Evangeline's words had opened up a chasm before Alex's eyes. She sped with winged feet. It was now twenty minutes since Tony had hidden himself. It seemed like an hour.

When the rest of the party reached the library, Caroline Pontifex was standing in front of a division in one of the bookcases, which ran flush with the walls and lined the whole room. She was standing in an attitude of concentrated thought, her back to the door. She was totally oblivious of the fact that the others had followed her. At last her hands went out to the gold-backed books; she had to stoop so as to pass her fingers over the long row of heavily-bound volumes. The watchers at the door saw them slip sensitively along the edge of the oak shelf. With almost mesmeric instinct she was feeling for some invisible object. She looked like a woman acting in her sleep.

Her fingers had stopped moving; they were pressing something. Suddenly the books and the shelves slipped back; they disappeared, leaving an opening in their place. Quickly, with-

out turning or looking round, Caroline Pontifex picked up her grand gown, and gathering it closely round her, slipped inside the hollow wall and disappeared.

Not one of the party, in their strangely-assorted costumes, had moved a step or uttered one word. They waited spell-bound. They did not ask themselves if she would return, or where she was going. They waited breathlessly for the development of the mysterious tragedy, for a tragedy the game of "dressing-up" had become.

At last the elaborate figure stepped out again from the secret passage. Alex was carrying the Honourable Reginald in her arms. He was completely transformed. He was now a tear-stained and very dishevelled little Tony. His tears had spoilt Caroline Pontifex's delicate complexion; they had washed the colour from her lips; and mixed with cobwebs, they had stained his own fine white satin coat and breeches. Twenty minutes in a dark passage alone with his imagination had almost bereft the child of his reason. His imprisonment had been so cruelly sudden, so totally unexpected. His little fingers had found the magic key to a wonderful hiding-place. When the panel slid back he had stepped inside. But when the door closed again, which it did with a spring, he was imprisoned in total darkness.

Even at first he had been a little afraid—for Tony was no lover of the dark—but he never doubted but that the seekers would soon find him. They would all think how clever he had been. If they did not come soon, he would call out, which he very soon did, for one minute seemed to him more than an hour.

When no one came to his rescue, his brave little heart began to throb. Supposing they never came? Supposing they couldn't find him, and all went off to bed and left him alone in the dark, stuffy passage? This idea so alarmed him that he stumbled and lost his way in the long passage, which led to the tower at the back of the house. Very soon he became terrified, for mice scuttled away at the sound of his footsteps and pieces of plaster dropped from the walls. Tony sat down; he was so overwhelmed with terror that in his hour of need he forgot to pray. A degree of self-control is necessary for prayer even in the most crucial moment. Poor little Tony had no control over his imagination. In Canada it had given him a magic and

beautiful world; in the darkness it was pitiless. Yet his brave little heart did not allow him to cry, not until his mother gathered him up in her arms, as a mother does when the son of her womb is restored to her.

It was only then that his tears, which destroyed Lady Caroline's complexion, brought relief to his overstrained nerves.

At the sudden sight of the dressed-up party, whose very existence she had forgotten, the light of battle leapt into Alex's eyes. She faced them boldly, almost defiantly. There was something in her personality which chilled them all. There was something in her strange discovery of the lost Tony which forbade them questioning her. Familiarity of any kind was impossible. She was to each one of them the haughty Lady Caroline, who might question others, but to whom any form of question was an unforgivable impertinence.

How had she known of the false bookcase? That was the question which had been in all their hearts. That was the question which none of them thought of asking her.

Tony's sobs served in lieu of conversation. They came from his very soul. They travelled through each mother-vein of Alex's body; they swept aside the curiosity of her hostess and the anxious guests.

"I must take him off to bed," she said, "and if you will excuse me, Hebe, I will remain with him. I won't come back."

"Don't ever leave me, mummy, ever alone again, not even with God!" Tony's arms were almost choking Alex.

"No, darling, Tony shall sleep with mummy to-night."

"And please, mummy, don't ever be the grand lady in the picture any more. I don't like dressing up!" His sobs choked his words.

"Never again, Tony! I'll just be your own poor, plain mummy." Alex smiled to Brother Leo as she left the party with a brief "Good-night." He had followed her to open the door

"Brother Leo," she said softly, "you were quite right. It was too dangerous a game to play."

"Very dangerous. It might have been another Mistletoe Bough," he said. "But all's well that ends well."

When the door had closed behind her, Hebe's pent-up emotion found relief in a deep sigh.

"Well, well," she said, "what do you make of that? Alex Hemingway, to my knowledge, has never, except for a few minutes the other day, been in this room. I remember quite well how astonished I was at the time, at her knowing that there was an Oliver Cromwell portrait in it, when we first spoke about dressing up; do you remember?"

Brother Leo looked grave. "We might almost believe that the spirit of Caroline Pontifex actually entered into her for the time being. The arrogant lady saved the child who was heir to the house."

"What do you suppose would have been the end of it if she hadn't discovered the passage?"

"There would have been a sad end to Tony. We never could have solved the mystery," Hebe said. "Just to think that that darling child might have been starved to death all alone in that dark place! I wonder where it leads to? The mystery of his disappearance would never have been solved, for none of the servants know of the passage, I'm certain. They mostly all came from London with me. I have never seen the owners of the place. Have you read anything about it in the books you have discovered about the house, Mr. Gibson?"

"No, nothing," he said, "nothing whatsoever."

"Well, well," Hebe said again, "that little accident has rather put the lid on our merry party, now hasn't it? It's only nine o'clock yet. We can't go to bed—I'd dream of this all night. How can we amuse ourselves for the rest of the evening?"

"Let's gamble," Evangeline said, "and forget it. Auction bridge—what do you say, mamma? I want to relieve Brother Leo of some of his despised wealth, help him to embrace our Lady of Poverty."

"In these gay rags?" Hebe asked. "Or shall we change?"

"Oh, no," Evangeline said, "it will be such fun to demoralize Brother Leo. He'll have to do penace all to-morrow—creep on his bare knees three times round the garden-path, after it's been well raked, or tramp to St. David's on Sunday, and offer up ever so many prayers on St. David's tomb."

Evangeline's gay words were not the expression of her thoughts, for the threatened tragedy, which had spoilt their game of "dressing-up," had added one more link to the chain which she had been forging of Alex's story.

CHAPTER VI

THE next morning Alex Hemingway found her hostess in her morning-room, writing letters—or rather, trying to make up her indolent mind to write them. She looked up as Alex came in.

"Am I disturbing you," Alex said, "or may I talk to you for a few moments?"

"Yes, do," Hebe said. "How is Tony this morning?"

"I have kept him in bed for his breakfast, and he really ought to see no one to-day but Jennie. I want to speak to you about last night, if I may."

Hebe smiled. She was nervous, for no reason whatsoever. Her voice showed it when she said, "We all got a terrible fright, didn't we? You look very tired. I'm afraid you didn't sleep, you poor thing!"

"I feel that I owe you an explanation," Alex said. "You must have wondered how I came to know of the secret passage."

"Why, Mr. Gibson thinks the spirit of Caroline Pontifex got into you and came to your rescue!" Hebe found herself conveying an apology to her guest for their natural curiosity on the subject.

Alex's eyes searched Hebe's. "Does he?" she said. "Does he really think that? Then the Lady Caroline is not so unlovable, after all!"

"He suggested the idea. Her spirit entered into you to help you to save the heir to the house."

"You must all have been very surprised and curious?" Alex purposely ignored Hebe's remark.

"It was strange, wasn't it?" Hebe said, "the way such an idea came to you." Alex's voice and attitude made Hebe nervously apologetic; they made her feel in the wrong.

Alex leaned forward from the low chair on which she was sitting. "Hebe," she said, "Caroline Pontifex had nothing to do with it. I knew of the secret passage, but I had forgotten it

until Evangeline said that Tony had disappeared 'as if the walls had gobbled him up.' "

"You did?" Hebe said. "Is that so?"

"Yes," Alex said. "I have known of it ever since I was a child. My people used to visit at Tregaron Manor. I knew of the Devil's Cauldron and the secret passage before I came here, but as I don't want to have anything to do with my old life or my old set in England, as I am going to be a mere worker, after I leave you, and all this sort of thing won't see me any more, I have never spoken to you about anything but my life in Canada. I am quite cut off from the old days, from the people my relations visited."

"Yes," Hebe said. "I think I follow your meaning."

"I want to begin life again from a different point of view. Old ties, old affections, are a hindrance." She laughed. "This is all my explanation. I'm really not a burglar—a female Raffles. I simply recollected the famous passage and found it."

Hebe rose from her chair and put her hand on Alex's shoulder. "I will keep your confidence to myself, dear. None of us think you are a burglar, or anything that's not nice."

"I'm just the most ordinary, humdrum sort of a woman, Hebe, a woman with only one idea in my head, and that's my boy. There is nothing more in me than that. I only want to lose myself in the world I used to be known in. I want to make a comfortable home for Tony, a new home." She sighed. "I wish people wouldn't be so interested in me, and so kind to me. I want to be absolutely free; accepting the smallest thing from others fetters one, even your lovely hospitality, Hebe."

"But why, you dear thing?" Hebe cried. "Mr. Gibson could do so much for you! He's very, very splendid, I think, and you're such a slip of a thing. Now, don't you think he's splendid?"

"Oh, I do," Alex said, "and he is going to help me. But I don't know that I want him to, for all that." She sighed rather anxiously.

"You are too independent. He is ever so lonely, with all his money, and he's got the biggest heart waiting for someone." Hebe looked at Alex. "You have Tony to consider. Think of that, my dear. What a future it would give him! You must

see for yourself what we all see, what you could do if you wanted. Why don't you?"

Alex rose from her chair. "I could do almost anything for Tony," she said, "but there are some things no woman ought to do."

"Why, of course," Hebe said, "if you feel like that about him! You see, I can't very well judge how you feel upon the subject of marrying again. I don't mind admitting that for the sake of companionship, and for other things, I'd not keep at arm's length as good and fine a man as Franklin Gibson, if he was ready to drop into my hands."

"You want to think it is so, Hebe dear. That's why you read all sorts of meanings into his interest in me and my affairs. It's just that he is really rather a Brother Leo at heart. The cult of Our Lady of Poverty appeals to him. If I was rich and splendid, he could never have thought twice about me. He has a passion for antiques and for poverty, for reclaiming derelicts, and I'm one."

Hebe laughed. "I believe he has," she said. "He's rather tired of the ease of wealth, of the lack of anxiety."

"He envies me the struggle I am just beginning—he told me he did."

"That's it, I feel he does. He's envious of everything about you."

"He's a little jealous of the gamble."

"You're right—he'd like to be a partner."

Alex sighed. "And I am getting more and more accustomed to all your luxury, and to the ease of this life. I've no passion for poverty—it's a dread reality with me. I believe I could go on like this for ever, just existing for pleasure and for the sensual enjoyment of ease and beauty."

"And so you could, if you played your cards properly."

"Please, Hebe, that is 'taboo.'" Alex's voice had lost its note of intimacy; she looked ready for flight.

"I'm sorry," Hebe said. "But it's hard to give up one's pet little plans, especially when one sees that they could come off."

Alex's eyes flashed defiance. "Then that was your plan, your idea—to bring us together?"

"Oh no, I never thought of it until you were together, until I found how interested he was in you, how he wanted you even

while he played with Evangeline. I only thought of it after you had both been here for a few days."

"Then forget it for evermore, you dear kind matchmaker! And now I'm going to leave you to your letters. I only came to tell you how my childish memory came to my rescue last night."

When Alex had left the room, Hebe picked up a cushion, and threw it at the corner of the sofa where she meant to sit. She gave it a thump, a hard thump, right in its middle, with her soft, idle hands.

"I declare, Alex Hemingway, you are further away from me than ever! I just daren't ask you questions when you look like that! You are as detached as a cloud in that Welsh sky. Why didn't you tell me more about your knowledge of the secret passage? Why didn't I question you? You just finish things up so that one can't begin them again. Oh, my, but I do wonder what your husband was like! Probably in other people's eyes, quite an everyday sort of Englishman, with a rod and a gun and well-cut clothes and not too much intelligence! A woman's love can just make a god out of a bit of very common English clay. But that one has just taken your heart with him to his grave! I reckon the only human thing left about you is your boy!"

Hebe sank into the corner of the soft sofa and picked up a box of chocolates. A jet-black Pekingese, a thing no bigger than an English squirrel, sprang on to her lap.

For the next ten minutes she shared the choicest chocolates in the box with the costly and beautiful little creature. His small red tongue, which he extended like a negro, was the only bit of colour about him.

As Hebe ate chocolate after chocolate, she pondered. Her thoughts were interrupted by the dog's persistent demands. With Hebe there was always plenty of time for everything, even for thinking.

CHAPTER VII

ALEX was reading in the garden; Tony was chasing the "fantails" along the sunny path; Evangeline was helping her mother to choose the colour and exact tone of her second bridal gown—she was to be married with little pomp or ceremony in the early days of September; Hebe was making out a long list of household luxuries, which she imagined to be necessities, to send to Harrod's—it had not yet entered her pretty head that superluxuries were not vital necessities in a well-organized household.

Nothing had disturbed the enjoyment of the house-party at Tregaron Manor for the last ten days. The Sarsfields' visit was almost at an end and Franklin Gibson's departure was imminent.

He was wending his way to where he had caught a glimpse of Alex. He had been making his last careful inspection of the back of the house; he had grown familiar with every detail of its ancient and modern architecture.

When he reached her chosen corner he stopped, and, with one of his conventional bows, said, "I have come to disturb you. I am going to be very selfish, deliberately selfish."

"That depends," Alex said, "upon whether you prove more interesting than my book or not." She held the volume up for his inspection.

"The test is too severe," he said despondently.

She was reading "Lavengro." Having read "Wild Wales" at his instance, she had been led on through a course of Borrow by Evangeline's enthusiasm. She was, however, not enjoying "Lavengro" as greatly as Evangeline had assured her that she would; Alex had not the same wild freedom of soul as the girl from Grand Pré, whose temperament so perfectly understood the spirit of "Lavengro." The freedom which Alex demanded was the freedom which was necessary for the building-up of a permanent home, a solid watertight home, for her son and herself. Being, above all things, a mother, a permanent home was essential to Alex's idea of childhood-happiness for Tony. To Evan-

geline a boat in the high skies was sufficient anchorage for her pilgrim's feet.

Franklin Gibson laid a small white packet on the open "Lavengro" which Alex had held up for his discomfort. It was daintily tied and neatly sealed.

She looked up with questioning eyes. "Is this for me?" she said. "Is it something I can accept?" Her serio-comic expression held a definite meaning. He understood it.

"I hope so," he said. "I accepted the same from you—the pearl heart you gave me I have had copied; this is the duplicate. Surely you can accept it?"

"Lady Caroline Pontifex gave it to Brother Leo, you mean."

"May Brother Leo keep it?" he asked, "just as a little memento of that great lady's impulse of charity?"

"I was wondering if I was ever going to get it back!" Alex said nervously, and with a forced laugh.

"Never," he said, "if you will take that one in exchange."

He watched the swift mounting of a blush to her forehead. Colour always made Alex extraordinarily attractive. She was still delicate-looking and now almost spiritually beautiful. Franklin Gibson had for some days past given way to almost a lover's extravagance of thought about her. To him, at least, she was beautiful. He treasured the idea that this soft breath of pink, which transformed and illuminated her delicate quality of looks, would be a thing of beauty and a joy forever if she would but accept his care and devotion. He had often seen in her the woman whom his love could make her, when her former beauty had shown itself behind the tired Alex, going and coming like summer smiles on a stormy lake, or like a spirit woman behind the real.

"I must see it first," Alex said. Her eyes did not meet his, nor were her fingers too steady as she untied the string. In spite of her obvious emotion, her face expressed a true woman's pleasure over the opening of a parcel, the receiving of a present.

"I imagine there was no particular sentiment attached to the heart you gave Brother Leo. If there had been, you would not have given it to him so impulsively, even for charity."

The lid of the box was open, but the cotton-wool had not been lifted; the heart was still hidden when Alex answered, "No, that pearl heart was given to me by my godmother on my con-

firmation. It was merely a conventional casting aside of the vows which she had still more conventionally taken upon herself at my baptism, but as neither my baptism or my confirmation 'took,' I don't mind parting with it, if you really want to keep the poor little heart, Brother Leo."

"Yes, I do," Franklin Gibson said gravely, "for your white heart, Alex, is holier to me than all holy days or things."

"Lady Caroline Pontifex's gift to charity, Brother Leo!"

"The pure white heart of my mystic Pearl Lady," he said.

"That is very prettily said, Brother Leo, but let us see if you may keep it." Alex's own heart was beating a little too quickly for the perfect composure of Lady Caroline, or for the carelessness which she wished to express to Franklin Gibson.

As she lifted up the cotton-wool she gave a cry of delight. When her tell-tale eyes met the eyes of the man who was bending over her, they were brimming over with tears.

A lover's desire to kiss them until his lips knew their saltness forced the American to curb his leaping senses. Alex was like a sensitive plant, which would shrivel up at his too eager touch.

"How lovely!" she cried, while the big, foolish tears poured from her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. "But I couldn't take it! Of course, you must have known that. Oh, why did you do it, why ever did you do it?"

"Because I love you, Alex," he said quietly. "Didn't you know that?"

"Oh, don't, don't!" she urged, as she rose from her seat. "Even if I did know it, didn't *you* know that you musn't say so? Did something not tell you that you mustn't say you love me?"

"And why mayn't I?" he said. "Can't you care for me? I will wait for your love. Just at present caring will do." He held her two hands in his; he had seized them passionately and determinedly. "I will wait very patiently, any length of time."

Alex did not speak. Must she tell him? But why now? Why not keep him as her devoted friend? Why send him away for ever?

"Don't you think you could care for me in time? Couldn't you ever care enough to marry me if I didn't expect love?"

Still clearer tears were rolling from Alex's eyes. His humble

asking of her meant a world of joy to her starved soul. His devotion hurt her. She wept easily; her tears touched him.

"You don't know how beautiful it is to be cared for again, to be wanted," she said. "It seems to warm all the cold grey world, to make me feel more keenly what I have done without."

"Oh, can't you ever care for me enough? Just a little bit at first?—I don't mind waiting. Can't you even want strong arms to work for you, strong hands to care for you, a loving heart to cherish you?"

Alex broke away from him. She almost fled, but he again caught and held her.

"No, I can't care," she said. "I told you I lived only for Tony. I can give you no caring, no return for your love."

"As for Tony," he said, "he'd be like my very own. I'd buy this home for you—I'd settle it on you and Tony."

A hysterical sense of the humour of the situation came to Alex as he said the words. He had not the least intention of boasting of his wealth—that was foreign to him—and she knew it, yet his words tore a wild answer from her sealed lips. They had delicately annoyed her; she wished everything to come to her child through herself and herself alone.

"You can't do that," she said, "not that, Mr. Gibson! You can't buy Tregaron—that's the one thing you *can't* buy."

"I haven't tried," he said. "I believe I could, if *you* wanted it."

"But I tell you you couldn't," she said.

"And why are you so sure?" he said. "A fancy price can do wonders, even with an entailed property, I believe . . ."

"You can't buy Tregaron," she said, "because it is mine!"

"Yours? Yours?" He was almost breathless as he said the words. "Tregaron Manor yours?"

"Yes," she said. "I inherited it from my mother. It will be Tony's when I die. I was her only child."

"My!" he said, while his mind travelled over a hundred incidents and conjectures. "My!" he said again, "you take my breath away."

"My father has a life interest in it—I get nothing from it at present. At his death I shall get it. My stepmother lives upon the rent Mrs. McArthur pays father for it at present."

"My, my!" he said. "And so you are the real mistress of this place? And you have to keep a boarding-house!"

"If I preferred to live an intolerable life with my stepmother, living in her house, existing on her bounty—for the rent of Tregaron is my father's until his death—I suppose I need not keep a boarding-house—I could live like a 'lady!' All the land was sold long ago—there is only the house left, and its treasures."

She laughed as she picked up the box which contained the pearl heart.

"This is admirably suited to the mistress of Tregaron Manor," she said, "a millionaire's copy of my poor little heart!" She looked at it tenderly. "What a beautiful, beautiful heart! It would be so homesick in St. Michael's Club—just think of it there! You must take it back, dear friend, and give it to someone else."

"Why?" he said. "Why can't you stay on for ever at Tregaron? Why can't I rent it from your father? Why can't you let Tony grow up in his proper surroundings, in his future home?" His eyes supplied his meaning; they were anxious.

"I don't suppose that Tony will ever be able to live here. He will always have to let it," she said. "It takes a lot of keeping up."

"He could live here if you'd marry me, if you'd only try to forget, and to care just a little bit for me. Try beginning to forget, Alex."

"But I mustn't forget," she said. "You all make it so easy for me to forget. I have already almost forgotten; every day I spend here I keep forgetting and then trying again to remember."

"Forgetting what?" he said. Her words made him feel unpleasantly chilly. What was she trying not to forget?

"That my husband is alive," she said abruptly, "that I am not a widow."

"Oh, my God!" he said brokenly. "Oh, my God!" He turned away; his head was bent. What more had she to tell? Did she realize how her blows had fallen, crashing upon his head like blocks of ice? Could her words be true? Why was she killing him?

"Try to forgive me," she said. "I thought it would never matter. . . . I didn't see any need to tell any stranger my

story, my poor, ordinary story, a marriage failure. I wanted to be free, absolutely free, never to speak of him to anyone or to hear of him again."

Franklin Gibson turned round swiftly. A new light had dawned upon him.

"So you don't love him? He hasn't taken your heart with him to his grave? Oh, my God, what next, what next?"

A strange gleam was in his eyes; he was angry with the woman who had deceived him. Yet the anger was leavened with gladness. The thought that no man had of her what he had not bewildered him, dazzled him.

"Just this," she said, "he has ruined my life. I wanted to rescue Tony. With the remnant of my little dowry, I ran away from him—or, rather, I left our hut in Canada while he was away big-game shooting. I sold my mother's pearl necklace. I am living on the money it realized; it is to build up a home for my boy."

The old tenderness returned to the American's eyes, the soft tenderness of affection untinged with passion, the tenderness which he had first felt for her.

"You poor child!" he said. "You poor, tired child!"

"I didn't think it would matter. I never said he was dead; I said I had lost him. Can you forgive my story?"

"Just a little white lie," he said, "to save a mighty situation. Just a little white lie, as clean as your own pearl heart."

"I was so ugly and so tired, such a human wreck, that I never imagined any man could ever think of me in that way again, in the way you have done. I can't imagine what has got into your senses about me. I never dreamed it could happen."

"Didn't you?" he said. "Didn't you know that there is something in you which nothing could kill but death itself, something which most every man will always want? My! but it is hard, for I do want you. I thought I wanted you a lot before, but I want you more than ever now, more than I ever wanted anything in the world, I reckon. You don't know what it is that you possess, and I can't tell you, but don't imagine you are safe from that trouble."

"I'm so sorry," she said penitently. "And I only told you the truth because your caring for me is so wonderful, so dear to me. Oh!" she cried piteously, "it makes me feel a woman again!

I had to tell you because I don't want to let myself care for you, and you mustn't let me—do you understand? You promised to be my friend—you must not be my lover."

"My God! Can that be true?" he said. "If things had only been as I thought they were! And that seemed hopeless enough!"

Through her tears Alex said tenderly, "I suppose you wouldn't have wanted me, I suppose fate would not have allowed it. It's just because it all can't be that you did such a funny, ridiculous thing as to fall in love with a poor, worn-out, penniless boarding-house-keeper. Fate arranges things that way. The gods take a positive delight in spoiling our simple human happiness! Their joys are our tragedies."

"Things might be worse," he said. "There's a little song singing away right down in my heart—it's keeping on all the time while we're talking. It says, 'Cheer up—she was getting to care for you—she told you the truth because she wanted not to care more.' "

"Oh, you make me ashamed!" Alex said, "so ashamed of myself! And now I've pained you, and you were so absolutely without cares or troubles before you met me!"

"Dear woman," he said, "it's the sweetest pain in the world, the sweetest of all the pains that lead us onwards and upwards. It's a pain I wouldn't part with for all my fortune."

"But I felt you cared. On the night we dressed up I thought you had probed my secret. I meant to tell you, and then I didn't. It was all so nice, too nice to smash to the ground like a house of cards. I tried to believe that I was mistaken."

"I have cared all the time," he said, "and that night I was sure you were in some way connected with the Pontifex family, but it never entered my head that you owned the place. My, even now it takes some believing! What a game you have been playing with us all!"

"And my finding of the secret passage! You never asked me about that—you were very kind."

"I was very interested," he said, "and, of course, curious, but Mrs. McArthur told me that you had been told of that passage when you were a child, that you had forgotten it until Miss Sarsfield said the walls had gobbled Tony up. I left it at that.

I never could question you about things you didn't wish to talk of. None of us can."

"My mother's father lived here. When I was a child I have very often played as Tony is playing now with the pigeons, and in the dark wood. He was the last of an extravagant race. The place came to my mother; he had no sons. It came without any money to keep it. I can't sell a stick or a stone of it—it is all Tony's."

"How interesting!" he said. "But the place isn't of much benefit to you. The sale of one of these pictures would help you a lot in your present position."

"Poor mother!" Alex said. "She wasn't to know that I would marry a man who would spend my small capital just as if it was the interest of his own money! The few thousands she left me I got on my marriage. If I had married wisely, those thousands would always have given me a little in the way of dress-money." She sighed. "As it was, I married unwisely." She looked into the honest eyes, which were so kindly intent on her story, and added very softly, "I loved too well. But it was for such a very little time—that was the trouble. I loved too well and very unwisely."

"Your caring for me enough to tell me all this makes me so proud and happy that I have almost forgotten that there is anything to be sad about." He laughed. "Isn't it a wonderful thing, what caring for another person can do for us, how it can alter life?"

"We won't be sad," Alex said. "We'll just try to be big, real, true friends." She paused. "It hasn't got too far for that, has it?" She asked the words eagerly, anxiously. She was beginning to feel that he must not cut himself off from her, that her rock of refuge must not be blown up with the dynamite of her secret. "Please do say that it hasn't got as far as that." Her voice was pleading, her eyes tender.

"Why, no," he said. "I'm a man, not a boy. I won't let it go as far as that. I mean to hold on to what I've got of you. I mean to help you to swim right ahead, to get back here to Tregaron."

"Thank you, thank you! I don't think I could do without you. It's so beautiful to know that you really care, that I can still mean so much to any man."

"You mean all the world to me," he said. "It's a fancy I've taken—you may put it like that, if you like, a mad, crazy fancy, but it sticks to me. I'm thinking about you all day long, how you would like this, what you would think of that, how every pretty, foolish thing I see would suit you. Why, dear, the very wind rushing through the tree-tops at night brings me new feelings about you. Nature makes me want you, this old house makes me want you, my useless money makes me want you. There isn't a thing in the universe that doesn't hold a thought of you in it for me. I want you to know everything I know, to feel everything I feel. That's why I'm so dead jealous of your poverty, and of your new adventure. I'm not in them. You won't find a corner where I won't follow you, follow you and surround you with all I possibly can."

A very beautiful Alex stood before him. The big love of the man made her feel pitifully unworthy, and at the same time exquisitely pleased. She was a woman again, desired and desirable. Larry's selfish treatment of her, his total disregard for her broken youth, for her lost looks, came back to her in striking contrast to this wealthy man's sympathy, to his devout thoughts of her. She could never feel for him as she had felt for Larry when he had captured her convent-heart and had so bewildered her with the glamour of passion that she had not asked herself if there was a country or a life for mere mortals where such a condition of happiness and romance could endure.

Stretched out before her, without this new anchorage to cling to, lay years of loneliness and toil, years in which life would be narrowed down to the drudgery of satisfying poor boarders with poor food. With all that his wealth could give her, and with his tenderness for her, how changed was the picture! How wholly enviable her position! They could live at Tregaron; Tony would grow up in the surroundings to which his birth and looks entitled him.

Franklin Gibson saw and understood something of the battle which stirred her soul. He loved her infinitely more for her humble confession of her growing affection for himself, of her own fear for herself, for this sudden tumbling down of her isolation and independence. It gave him a privilege, as he expressed it to himself, the privilege of helping her to hold on to the fight which she had begun. He felt convinced that because

the triumph of righteousness is one of the governing laws of life, something would come forward out of the blackness, which would clear the path before them. The man that he was could not entertain for one moment the thought of Alex sharing his life and his wealth in any other way than as his wife. Her marriage vows were to him documents in God's keeping, which no laws of man could annul.

The sacredness of marriage had for Alex become a myth, one of the things in which you are taught to believe in your youth and which you laugh at when you are grown-up. But in the eyes of the State, and of her fellow countrymen she was the wife of Larry Hemingway, and nothing on earth, for Tony's sake, would induce her to cast a slur upon his name. His mother might keep a boarding-house and work her fingers to the bone because the laws of the State were as they were, but she might not lead a beautiful and intellectual life as a wealthy man's mistress. When the boy grew to manhood he must not have to condone the sins of all Magdalens for his mother's sake. To all men their own mothers must be above suspicion.

Her lover stood beside her. To kiss those quivering lips which honour forbade him was the one dominant thought at the back of all his thoughts, yet it was only Alex's slim hand which he held in his, but he held it as if it were the kingdom of heaven.

"Do you understand," he said, "that if I loved you less I might ask for more? Do you know that, loving you as I do, I could not accept it even if it were possible?" He raised her fingers to his lips. "Pale hands, I love them. That is the song I always think of when I look at your hands, which no work can destroy."

Battling with her tears, she said, "Now you know how weak I am, how necessary it is for me to wear my armour of isolation to protect myself."

"My dear, my dear, don't you speak like that! You are so young, so cruelly young!"

"But I was quite accustomed to it all," she said. "I had grown used to the emptiness and isolation of my life before you came."

Franklin Gibson kissed her yielding hands more despondently.

"Now, if you had loved Evangeline instead of me," she said,

"there would have been no complications, no obstacles. We could have had wedding-bells."

"And no constancy," he said. "Supposing her eyes lost their blueness—what then? Where would be my heaven?"

"But mine have lost everything," she said. "They were once very pretty, Larry thought."

"You are you," he said.

"Ah!" she sighed. "Poor plain me—that is what you want! You don't know how your imagination has glorified me!"

"How am I going to live without you?" he said. "That's what I want to know! Whatever has created the caring, it's there right enough, and you know it."

His earnest words made Alex laugh. The old bitterness in her soul leapt up at his sentiment and devotion. Her laugh hurt him. She quickly pleaded forgiveness. She must not wound his American sentiment, as she would not disillusion her own child.

"I was thinking," she said, "that if only my husband could hear anyone talking about me like that, how funny he'd think it—really he would."

"The brute!" he said. "My God, he doesn't know what he possesses!"

"Oh, doesn't he?" Alex said. "He knows exactly what he possesses—that is why I left him. I was not going to go on just being possessed by any man, holy matrimony or no holy matrimony. I will own myself."

"There are such men," Franklin Gibson said furiously, "such brutes!"

"No, Larry is not a brute," she said quickly, "far from it."

"He isn't?"

"No," she said. "I think that if we had been rich, he would have been all right. I suppose we should have 'got along.' We never quarrelled; we had no open rupture. He was delightful when he was nice. Everyone liked him."

"Don't be so bitter, child!" he said. " 'Got along,' 'all right,' —fancy speaking like that of life lived with you!"

"You see, I expected too much. I, as well as he, was to blame. He was an only child, spoiled from his cradle upwards. I suppose I should have gone on spoiling him for the rest of my natural life, given him until I had no more to give. He had

not dreamed of concessions, nor had I. Matrimony means a state of perpetual concessions to each other, if it is to be a state of solid endurance—what is called a success."

"And why didn't you?" he said. "I find English wives carry out the selfish training begun by their husbands' mothers. They spoil their husbands just as American men spoil their wives, as I'd give all the world to spoil you."

"It was Tony. I wanted to save my last little bit of money to rescue him from the life I saw led by so many sons of wastrel English fathers in Canada—loafers, drifters, idlers sent out to Canada by despairing relatives. Tony could easily become one of them. Idling and selfishness are his father's only sins. If Larry were wealthy, he would simply be a pleasant gentleman of the leisured classes. If we had been rich, I should not have lost my looks; I should have remained more like the girl with whom he fell in love; and there would, I suppose, have been fewer evidences of his neglect."

"Oh, my!" he cried. "Don't say that you worked for him and supported him, and you gave him that boy, and he didn't see in you a piece of rare womanhood, a brave comrade! Didn't he love you all the more for the youth he had killed in you?"

"No, he didn't," Alex said mockingly. "He saw a girl who had worn very badly, a girl who used to be amusing and had become unpleasantly serious, a girl who had once thought that life was a splendid play-ground, and discovered that it was a gigantic workshop. Poor Larry! he was linked to a weary cabin-drudge, instead of a female merry-Andrew like himself. But it is I who have done the deserting, remember! In a court of law I should not have a leg to stand on, or one real sin to bring against him."

"But the sins of omission, aren't they infinite?"

"Ah!" Alex said, "that's it. To a woman the sins of omission are the least forgivable of all sins. I used to think sometimes, when I was tired out, that if he would only occasionally remember to be sympathetic, only try to be my lover again, even if he didn't feel like it, if he had cried when my hands were frostbitten and blistered, as he once did, I could have gone on for ever working and washing and scrubbing for him. You see, he even omitted to remember that he had forgotten."

"I know," he said. "I've often seen that. A man needn't

slave his life away for his wife if he does not omit the little attentions that the dear woman in her demands. If he's oblivious of his omissions, he's a failure in her eyes."

"Virtues are not what make married life tolerable," Alex said, "it is the unnecessary trifles, the romance of personal attentions, the flattery of remembered whims. That's why a really bad man often succeeds in retaining a woman's affection through all the disillusioning intimacy of matrimony, where a better man fails. Don't you think so?"

They were silent for a little time. Only Tony's laughter drifted to their subconscious ears from the garden below. With his voice a new picture rose before the American's eyes. He saw the laughing child as heir to the old house.

"Just fancy," he said, "how changed things can seem to us in so short a time! That boy's voice strikes a different note in me now. He is the real owner of all this; that voice is the voice of someone born to rule. I can't explain it—perhaps it's because we Americans feel more sentiment about these things than you do."

"Oh," Alex said, "you won't feel like that about him, will you? You won't let the others know? I don't want to spoil him, to bring him up to think extravagantly. He can never live here; he must be very middle-class."

"Not if you don't wish it," he said. "Your confidence in me is a great privilege. But don't you think it would be wiser to tell the others? What's the use of hiding the fact? It's not going to harm you—how can it?"

"Only in this way, that I want to be a nobody, to belong to nobody, to have nothing to do with any well-known family. If I am just nobody, I can lose myself." She looked up implor-ingly. "My husband won't find my home if I am not mixed up with people of my own standing in England."

"I see," he said. "But do you think it will make the probability of his discovering you more likely?"

"Yes, I do," she said. "Don't you know the way people go on saying, 'Are you related to so-and-so?' If you say you are, then you are told that they know your cousins, or that such-and-such a person is connected with you by marriage. The chain becomes linked and the truth leaks out—you are discovered. I don't

want to be anybody of anywhere. I always say I am not a Hemingway of anywhere in particular."

"I know you do," he said, "but you dressed up! I didn't dream that you actually owned the place that night, but I knew you were one of the descendants of the Pontifexes." He paused, then said reflectively, "I do think that if you told Mrs. McArthur she wouldn't betray your confidence. Just tell her everything, and ask her to keep your secret."

"And Evangeline too! If even one person knows a thing, it's no longer a secret."

"Oh, I don't think she matters."

"I see," Alex said. "You think that I have been sailing under false colours in Hebe's house?"

"I think," he said, "that it would clear up the mystery of the secret passage for her. Miss Sarsfield, I imagine, has never questioned the situation; she accepted the fact that the spirit of Caroline Pontifex entered into you to save Tony's life. The girl lives in the clouds; her world is peopled with unrealities. She understands Pan better than man. I believe she's playing with him now down in the reeds by the river. What a wild spirit she is!"

"Beautiful Evangeline!" Alex said. "She fascinates me! I should hate to see her chained by domestic shackles. Pan is a better mate for her, Pan with his wayward wanderings."

"Her great god Pan will want some dollars," Franklin Gibson said laughingly.

"And some temperament!" Alex said. "Evangeline always reminds me of these Welsh skies—their pure blues, their flying clouds, their fire and wildness when the sun sets."

"I like her mother," he said. "It's just as if a timid little wren had hatched out a wild falcon in her nest all unawares."

"The falcon takes the wren in its grasp," Alex said, "and carries it into the blue. Mrs. Sarsfield enjoys her flights; she sees strange worlds from its fearless poise."

"My, yes!" he said, with a deep-drawn sigh. "The girl's mighty sweet to her mother. I love to see it." He paused.

A rolling wave of sound travelled to their ears, like the notes of a distant temple bell. It was the lunch gong, summoning them to one of Hebe's delicate and extravagant feasts. The

meals which Hebe ordered were never ordinary; they always contained some element of surprise, of novelty.

Alex's eyes showed astonishment. "How the morning has flown!" she said. "And I've scarcely read a line of Borrow. I thought it was just about twelve o'clock."

"If we haven't read very much, we have travelled very far and fast," he said, "even farther than Lavengro in all his wanderings."

"Farther than I ever intended, farther than is wise."

"Much farther than I ever hoped. What a world we hold between us now!"

Alex hurried her steps; she looked nervous, apprehensive.

"There is to be no turning back?" he asked. "Whatever lies before us, we will face it together?"

"I cannot take so much and give so little. You have all your life before you; there are others who are so infinitely more what you really want."

"Hush!" he said. "Don't wound what I cherish so much."

The words were scarcely said before they were met in the arched avenue by Evangeline and Tony. The latter had distinguished himself by falling into a shallow part of the river; he was being taken home to have his clothes changed. His smock was soaking; his head was hatless. When he saw his mother, he cried out:

"I felled in the river, mummy, but I'm not a bit wet, for Jennie picked me up as quick as quick."

"No, 'not a bit wet,' " Alex said, laughingly. "My dear little son, what a pity it is that water makes such a mess! How very unkind of it to tell me the truth when you are telling me such a strange story!"

"I mean the me inside my clothes, mummy. *It's* not wet, really and truly it isn't, not a bit. I can feel it's quite dry and warm all over."

"You must run into the house, and get your things off quickly. How did it happen, Jennie?"

"He was trying to cross some stepping-stones by himself, ma'am. One turned over and in he went. It was quite shallow."

"I suppose you insisted upon crossing them alone, Tony?" Alex's eyes tried to be severe.

"Yes, 'cos I wanted to be a big boy and help you, mummy.

You know I have to be your little son and a big man all in one—you said I had to be, didn't you?"

"Yes, Tony, I said so." Alex's eyes were half tearful, half merry. She did not dare to look at Franklin Gibson.

"Then 'cos a big man could easily cross on the stones by his self, then so must I." He pushed his soft hand into his mother's. "See, mummy? You told me, when I didn't want to put on my own boots, that no one can tell what they can do till they try, so I had to try to cross the steps, hadn't I?"

CHAPTER VIII

THE boarders were all in bed at No. 200 St. Michael's Square. Lights were out, all save one in a small room on the ground floor, which Alex reserved for herself as her office.

Her boarders for the most part were girl-students or elderly females who always found their days too long, and a few Colonial sightseers, who were as a rule only too glad to retire to their rooms by ten o'clock. At half-past ten the electric light was turned off at the main. Those who chose to sit up later had to pay for the candles or lamp-oil which they burnt.

Alex's venture had proved more successful than she had ever dared to hope. Her house was full to overflowing and daily she had applications from boarders whom she could not take in. But never in her wildest imaginings had she visualized the appalling drudgery and exactingness of the life, the petty economies, the unending wants of the boarders. Most of the elderly women seemed to take it for granted that, thrown in with their board, they were entitled to an unlimited supply of sympathy from Alex for all their trivial woes and ailments. They would have kept her for half-hours and hours if she had allowed it, listening to the recital of their family affairs and tragedies. Each of these homeless, superfluous souls looked upon her as their special property. There was the usual petty quarrelling and gossiping amongst them which is the natural outcome of aimless, idle lives.

The young boarders, all eager, vital students, gave her little trouble, beyond their untidiness; one and all of them had as little idea of keeping their rooms in order as the inhabitants of Red Indian wigwams.

To Alex it seemed as if she had planned out dinners and lunches and breakfasts for these same people ever since she could remember. "Skirts" of mutton for Irish stews, and all the other strange, inexpensive parts of the "trinity of animals" which

form the meat diet of the British Commonwealth, became a part of her very existence.

The boarders paid regularly, and their payments left a better profit than she had anticipated at the end of each week. She had a fairly good cook, as "plain cooks" go, in a land where more food is destroyed than is ever enjoyed, and two happy-natured Irish girls, who "worked" the house not wisely, or too well.

The first time Alex had had to make out her weekly accounts, she had been faced with a task which she had not the least idea how to tackle. There was always the boarders' washing which had to be added to their weekly payments, and any small extras, such as hot milk at night or special afternoon-teas. Alex had never made out a bill in her life; she was utterly at a loss as to how it ought to be done, and almost certain that her arithmetic would not stand the test of accurate adding-up. Always in her darkest moments something had happened, someone had turned up to help her. That night she had felt thrown on her own resources.

There was a knock at her door.

It was the page-boy who attended to the front door and the telephone and cleaned the knives and boots and doorsteps. He had come to give notice; his mother had been offered a new place for him, where he was to get sixpence a week more and where the boarders did not stay so long, which meant that he would get more tips when they departed.

Alex smiled good-naturedly when he told her his tale. It was a practical and very human one.

"Are you happy here, Horatius?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am." The boy's eyes kindled. Alex's voice had suggested a rise in pay.

"Would you like to stay if I can see my way to giving you another sixpence a week? I can't ask the boarders to go, can I?"

"No, ma'am. Yes, ma'am, if mother's willing, I'll stay."

Something made Alex say, rather wearily, "Now, if you could do accounts, Horatius, I would give you a whole shilling a week more." She laughed at the very idea; it was so little likely that the boy could make out an account in the proper fashion.

"I can, ma'am—I have often done accounts."

"You can make out weekly accounts?"

"Yes, ma'am. I used to help my master every week when I was in an Italian restaurant. They had six men boarders. The work was too heavy, so I left."

"Shut the door, Horatius, and sit down."

The boy did as he was bid with alacrity.

"Now, take that paper and pen, and I will read aloud all the items for Miss Kemp's bill, and then you can add it up."

The small page wrote plainly and neatly. He dated the bill and added it up. It was not a long one, but it was done in the regular manner. He handed it to Alex, who looked at it carefully. She counted it up and passed it as correct, with a fine air of pretending to know that it was all right.

When she laid it down, she laughed happily and contentedly. Another trouble had slipped from her shoulders; she had found a book-keeper and "buttons" in one. She certainly had the best of luck.

Thus the compact was sealed. Horatius was still to attend to the front door at No. 200 St. Michael's Square, and a shilling per week was to be added to his wages for his weekly labour as accountant.

On this particular Saturday night, while she was waiting for her youthful accountant, her thoughts were very far from St. Michael's Square. They were with Evangeline and her mother in Glastonbury. It had been Mrs. Sarsfield's wedding-day. All the old party at Tregaron Manor, except Alex herself, had gone to Glastonbury for the event. Hebe McArthur and Franklin Gibson and some of the bridegroom's relations were staying at the old pilgrims' inn in the long village street.

Evangeline was to come up to London and board with Alex for some weeks directly the wedding was over. She was to arrive the next evening. Alex was looking forward to her coming with almost excitement. Her busy life had put a very great distance between her idle weeks at Tregaron Manor and the strenuous present. She had sunk back again into a life of hard work; not the physical hard work of the log-hut days in Canada, but the endless round of domestic duties connected with the housing of her paying-guests.

Franklin Gibson's recommendation to give the servants an interest in the concern was proving highly successful.

In her enterprise, Alex had much to be thankful for. Finan-

cially speaking, it was a complete success, so far as it gave her a comfortable home for herself and for Tony. But as it is only big troubles which make us ignore little ones, so it was that, all these things going smoothly, she was able to feel more acutely the dreary drudgery of her life, to visualize the dismal future. It was not the hard work which she detested; she had been well trained to that in her cabin-home in Canada. It was the lack of colour in her days and the total absence of beauty—caused chiefly by her inability to leave the house for more than a few minutes at a time.

Her self-examination to-night had been acute. It had taken the form of imagining herself forgotten and replaced in Franklin Gibson's thoughts, as in everyone else's. With a woman's ability for blaming a man for acceding to her urgent moral arguments, she subconsciously scorned him for doing what she had asked him to do.

During the first six weeks of her installation in St. Michael's Square, in the "Residential Ladies' Club," he had been a great deal in her company. This was only natural, as his advice had been of much service to her, and the guests had not yet settled in. Things were in a fluid state. Her first boarders had been friends of the acquaintances she had made on board the Atlantic liner, young Canadian students, or elderly ladies from Eastern Canada who had arrived in England just in time to meet her demand.

Once the start had been made, there was an unending flow of applications, all bringing with them the recommendation of some boarder who had appreciated the refinement and cleanliness of the Club and Alex's happy knack of creating a homely atmosphere for homeless individuals.

After these first weeks were over, and things had settled down into the ordinary routine of a "boarding-house for ladies only," Alex saw that the intimacy and frequent visits of Franklin Gibson must cease. Already she could feel, rather than hear, the curiosity and gossip they were causing in the public sitting-room, where the elderly ladies met together to air their grievances and discuss their ailments. Alex had already asked herself many times why she was feeding and keeping alive these useless drones, these women who, through no fault of their own, were a mere cumbrance to the world. Her answer was that prob-

ably, in the great scheme, they were such as they were for the very reason that they created a demand for the profession which she had adopted.

So Franklin Gibson's visits ceased. He, even more than Alex, saw the wisdom of her decision. Apart from the convention of the situation, his own feelings decided the matter. He was no longer a boy, it is true, but he was a man in the full vigour of his manhood, and the more he saw of Alex in her new phase of dependence upon his judgment, and in her capacity as a worker and organizer, the more he admired and desired her. In those six weeks she had been full of excitement and endeavour, planning and arranging and working. It had been great fun, as well as hard work. With a kind and admiring companion, the task had been robbed of many disagreeable qualities. A taxicab had always been ready to hurry her from one point to another, and she had enjoyed good meals at amusing, if secluded, restaurants. And, above and beyond all else, she had been perfectly certain of sympathy and help whenever she asked for it or needed it. Franklin Gibson seemed to sit with his ear to the telephone waiting his summons.

These "extras," as she called them, she had accepted during her installation. They had made what would have been too great an effort for her still overstrained condition a rather enjoyable experience. There had also been a theatre or two and an excursion on Sunday afternoons.

Apart from these amenities, she had not accepted a single cent from all the millionaire's dollars. Where she thought in pennies, he thought in gold; but she might not accept one of the many offers which he could not resist making to her, when points were raised as to the practical wisdom of buying a better article at a higher price.

The excitement was over now. Franklin Gibson had been shooting in Scotland while she had been buying filletted plaice and rock-cod, foreign tomatoes and other cheap commodities for her boarders. The girl students, who had no mid-day meals, only paid twenty-five shillings per week.

It was so different now, sitting alone in her small office in the St. Michael's Square Club, with all the rest of the house in darkness, making out her weekly bills. She felt an illogical bitterness at the thought of how apparently easily the American

had accepted his dismissal, how little it had interfered with the enjoyment of his sport in Scotland, or his desire to join the party at Glastonbury on the occasion of Mrs. Sarsfield's marriage.

Most people will say that Alex was very ungrateful, that she ought to have been extremely thankful that the speculation had not left her penniless. Perhaps she was—human nature is not grateful, and above all things, Alex was human; it was her hidden charm, her pools of silence which spoke so eloquently. Franklin Gibson had been the true friend she had implored him to be. Indeed, outwardly he had been so little more than a kind friend, that Alex, with a woman's jealousy of devotion, had one day taunted him with his new attitude towards her. Deliberately conscious of her own wickedness, and of the debacle which she knew would follow on the top of her words, she had said, with a little sadness:

"I suppose it is actually seeing me as a house-drudge, and knowing the real me, in my mundane surroundings, that has wiped the glamour from your eyes? I feel I am no longer your Sweet Lady of Poverty."

He had not at first answered her, and so she had persisted. It was one of those moments in which a good woman becomes base.

"Anyhow," she said, "you certainly have changed, while I have done nothing that I know of to cause it. What have I done? Tell me."

He swept round and folded her in his arms. Never had she known such a tempest of love, such a revelation of the hidden man. Until that moment she had but half understood all that had been offered to her on that summer morning at Tregaron. She had not in the least realized the heart or the passions of the man with whom she was toying. If she was alarmed, she deserved all she got.

This new revelation had opened up a danger where there had been none—for her, at least, for her caring for Franklin had gone little deeper than the pleasure it afforded her wounded womanhood to be once more loved and desired, and her enjoyment of his very agreeable companionship and sympathy.

Now the situation was charged for them both with new and very combustible chemicals. A fire had been kindled where before there had only been a faint smoke. Things had been

agreeable before; now they were dangerous and exciting. Her taunt had brought about a crisis, and looking into her soul, she knew that she had done it coolly and deliberately. The "good friendship" stage had existed as long as her human stock of morals would allow. For very excitement's sake, or for some reason which cold words cannot explain, she had reverted to the primitive woman. Unfortunately she had chosen a psychological moment, a moment in which her lover's self-control and resistance were at their weakest.

After that he had taken his dismissal—which, womanlike, she demanded from a high moral standpoint. He had submitted quietly for her sake, and hers alone.

But for her boy, Alex knew that she would have gone to him like a homing pigeon after a long and weary journey.

With her American lover, it was a higher power than Tony which sent him flying from the path of temptation. In his opinion, a marriage vow could not be broken, and he would make no mistress of the woman he worshipped.

Knowing all this, Alex still blamed him, although she would not admit it; she blamed him for his ability to do without her. A woman ever bears a grudge against the lover who can take his dismissal.

"Men can put these things aside so easily," she said. "Now, if I loved Franklin as he said he loved me, I should not have taken any woman's 'no' for an answer, any dismissal on moral ground as definite. A woman would have remained in London just because he was in London, even if she could never have seen him. A woman dreads the idea that time will ever heal her pangs of love, a man tries to cure his."

At last Horatius appeared. His coming and the necessity of making up the accounts put a stop to her moralising—which to a woman is so often demoralising.

In his smart uniform, with its bright buttons, Horatius looked a very different boy from what he had done when he entered Alex's service. He was now her devoted slave and helper. Without Horatius, 200 St. Michael's Square would have lost one of its greatest assets.

PART III

TWO YEARS LATER

CHAPTER I

THE awfulness of the great war during its second year was devastating the world, from the Pacific Ocean to the English Channel. It had changed the social life of every civilised country. It had given important work to every idle woman in England. In 1916 this is how we find the pleasure-loving house-party of Tregaron Manor, who in 1914 had but one aim—to fill their days with beauty and amusement.

Hebe is in America, doing propaganda work for England; Evangeline is on the land, as third gardener in a large limbless hospital in Scotland; and her mother, who is now Mrs. Fairclough, is the busy wife of a busy doctor, upon whom the demands of war have flung much extra work; Alex is still busy with her boarders, who have all become eager war-workers, with scarcely enough time left on their hands for the darning of their own stockings; Franklin Gibson has been fighting in the English Army in Flanders ever since the outbreak of the war.

Of all our friends Mary Sarsfield is the happiest. Allan is the only fly in her ointment. He has not offered himself for the front; he has found exemption in his work as an ear-specialist. He is benefiting by the war, even while it must be admitted that he is doing good work, exacting and necessary work.

Since her mother's marriage, Evangeline has avoided meeting Allan in Glastonbury; all her visits have been carefully planned so as not to clash with his holidays, or his short visits to his home.

* * * * * *

When this chapter opens in the spring of 1916 Evangeline was seated with her mother in a high room in the famous

pilgrims' hotel in Glastonbury. Its window looked down upon the market square of the town.

It was a quiet evening. Swallows were circling overhead, and cows were being driven from green meadows to ancient byres. The town band had taken up its position in the square; the music-stands were arranged round the market cross. All the girls and able-bodied youths who were left in the village had gathered together to enjoy their weekly dance.

Evangeline's arm was thrown round her mother in the old protecting way. They were close by the window, looking down upon a pretty sight, for Glastonbury girls are bonnie and their dancing looked better than it really was by the charm of its setting.

The music stopped in the middle of a dance; there was a sudden lull. The quiet town had become aware of the significance of war. A pontoon train, of sombre grey, had rattled down the street opposite the hotel. It had come to a halt just above the square. Its colour gave it a very businesslike and sinister appearance, while the military promptness of action and the activity amongst the men who had arrived with it, introduced a real and war-like meaning into the sylvan scene.

The dancing was suspended while the train was put in order for the night. Evangeline and her mother were deeply interested and stirred. So far, to all outward appearances, at any rate, Glastonbury had not been affected by the war. The Chalice Hostel still had its devotees to the cult of mediævalism; its inmates still wove golden tissue and painted breviaries and wrote morality plays.

The train was soon placed in order down one side of the quiet street. Two sentries were posted to guard it from the curious and prying fingers of small boys. The soldiers who had come with it hurried down to the scene of dancing, all eager to join in the fun which their coming had interrupted. Glastonbury must have appeared to them a very desirable place.

While this was happening, Allan had entered the room. He had arrived unexpectedly for a short holiday. He looked much older since Evangeline had seen him last, and very tired. She had not seen him since her mother's wedding-day, and on that occasion she had scarcely spoken to him.

Now Evangeline was nervous and unhappy; she had no words

for him. That he had not joined up had angered and disgusted her. She had felt so sorry for his father that she had not even mentioned Allan's name since her arrival in Glastonbury. Nothing in the whole world, she thought, should have kept him from fighting for England in her hour of need. She would listen to no arguments from her mother, who tried, for her husband's sake, to excuse Allan. He was of military age, he was able-bodied and in perfect health. His duty was at the front. That was all Evangeline understood.

Allan mistook her blush. He did not imagine that it was for his own shame, that she was angry at his civilian clothes. He kissed his gentle stepmother, to whom he was devoted, but Evangeline did not even offer her hand in greeting, or her eyes. She nervously remarked upon the picturesqueness of the scene below.

"Look, the men belonging to the pontoon train are all longing to dance with the girls," she said, "but the girls are far too modest and too correct to dance with strangers. Do you see, mamma, that poor soldier has taken up a wee dog for his partner? He is trying to shame the girls into dancing with him."

"The girls wouldn't be as shy as that in London," Allan said.

"One likes to see it," Mrs. Fairclough said, "but it looks absurd, girls dancing with girls and soldiers with soldiers, when at heart they are, I suppose, longing to dance with each other."

"I feel like going down and dancing with one of the soldiers myself," Evangeline said, "just to lead the way."

Allan looked at her. In the old days, he thought, she might have done it, but this new Evangeline was somehow different.

"You never would!" he said, by way of drawing her.

"I would," she said, "if mamma wouldn't mind. As your father's wife, she might object." She paused and then said, "I have more sympathy with the girls who give their Tommies everything than with these village prudes. I used to dance with them in the hospital whenever they were able, so why not in this village square? They deserve so much from us! The biggest villain who ever enlisted becomes a hero when he faces death for us stay-at-homes. I never can condemn the girls who

give the best a woman can give to the boys home from the front."

She could not have spoken more plainly if she had said, "But you are not one of them—you are a shirker. My womanhood is not for you. You have lost it, exchanged it for a mess of pottage."

Allan felt the blow. She had meant to hurt him. He considered that she had no right to. As with all women, sentiment ran away with her head. What could he do at the front, one in the mighty hordes, as compared to what he was doing in his profession in London? Yet her beauty and scorn lashed him. He felt ashamed of his lost power over her. He had not moved her, except to scorn.

"Perhaps you still look at the world from upside-down?" he said. "I don't want to detract one atom from the glory of any of these soldiers, but, remember, many of them never were so well off in their lives before."

Evangeline's eyes dropped. What love could survive those words? How dare he say them?

" 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,' " she said quietly. "Do you call that looking at the world upside-down? To strengthen the cause which is to be a real and lasting victory, every man should inscribe his name in the army of its upholders."

Allan thrust his head further out of the window, making a pretence of seeing what was going on round the corner of the street.

"I think sentiment is apt to dissipate reason and wisdom amongst the English," he said. "We send brains to the front which can ill be spared at home. A man who has no instinct for the slaughtering of human beings, and who probably will never kill a German, but who could save the sight of hundreds of suffering soldiers, or discover valuable secrets in chemistry and science, has been put into the trenches and sniped before he has done one thing except cost his country a good deal of money."

"Oh, you don't understand!" Evangeline cried. "You never could! That same man, if he was a man, had to go, he wanted to go; he longed to suffer, to take his share in the great agony. He wanted to lay down his life for his friends. If you love

a person, you want to suffer what that person is suffering; it wounds you not to suffer. That is the true meaning of the bodily chastisement of the martyrs. These men love humanity; they are laying down their lives for it, for the cause, which is humanity. Whatever you have given, if you have not given life itself, it is as nothing compared to what the poorest sort of soldier gives."

"Then you think genius and mere physical fitness ought to be regarded in one and the same light in this war? You would send our highest intellects to the trenches together with the common herd?"

"I would have them go," she said, "everyone of them, until the State forbade it. I would have them all there in spirit, I would have them angry because they could not go. I wish I was twenty years older, with six sons to give to the cause."

"Oh, Eve!" It was the old Mary Sarsfield who spoke. "My dear, you wouldn't say that if you were a mother. You think you would, but when it came to the test . . ."

"I would, mamma! If it broke my heart, I'd let them go, I'd have them go. Broken hearts are the wounds we women must suffer, and suffer uncomplainingly. If we can't fight, we can endure. Our broken hearts are as nothing to their broken bodies. Oh! their poor broken bodies! I have seen the mothers in the hospitals. I know—not one of them would renounce the glory of a son killed in the war. He is dearer to them, and nearer to them, than those who are living. That is one of the things which this war has taught us, the triumph of spirit over matter, the nearness of our dead."

Allan withdrew his head from the window. "I will see you later on," he said. "I must just look up one or two friends."

He left them, with his face no less white and tense than Evangeline's.

"I think you were cruel, Evangeline. You don't know the splendid work he is doing. He never tires; he works from morning until night—one of the partners is seriously ill. Even his father says that he is essential to the cause in the special work he is doing."

"He has not offered his life," Evangeline said, "nor has he wished to. He is safe. Oh, how dare he face the suffering world, how dare he go about in civilian clothes?" Her voice

broke. "Mamma, I loved him once. Do you know how it hurts?"

"Eve, I know."

"I wanted him to be the very first to go. I never dreamed of his sheltering himself behind his profession. Oh, that career!"

"Allan looks upon it from the logical and economical point of view—we must husband our capital in brains and in special knowledge as well as in food supplies."

"He is husbanding his career," she said. "I see no further than that. How I hate his career, his brains! Give me a loyal fool. Just think of it—if I'd been an heiress two years ago, at the present moment I should have been the wife of a shirker!"

"Oh, Eve!"

"I should. Just think of it—I really loved him in the days of peace."

"You are so ardent, Eve. Your patriotism and feelings know no half measures. Is all your love killed because he looks at things differently?"

"Thank God I was too poor!" Evangeline said evasively.

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Next morning came the terrible news of a great naval disaster in the North Sea. England's pride and glory had suffered defeat; her first naval engagement in the great war had ended ingloriously. The news had come officially into the town in the early morning, with the daily papers. By noon one suppressed sob choked the inhabitants of the quiet city. In the old streets, hallowed by the feet of pilgrims, you could hear the wings of the angel of death passing to its ancient sanctuary. Heads were bowed; eyes were shamed. Newspapers were passed silently from hand to hand. Feelings were too deep for spoken comments or expressions of surprise.

It was Allan who brought the paper in to his father's breakfast-table. The doctor looked up. There was an expression of expectancy and alarm in his eyes. Could he speak at last? Had the public been given the news? He had been silent and unusually depressed the evening before; Evangeline had imagined that it was because Allan's presence amongst them had brought the evidence of his "shirking" more vividly to his mind. She knew that if Allan rose to be the greatest aurist the world had

ever known, it would not wash the stain from his name in his father's eyes.

"We have had a naval encounter in the North Sea," Allan said, "a pretty nasty affair. Read the account of it for yourself." His voice was cracked and broken.

"Ah!" his father said, with something like a sigh of relief as he stretched out his hand for the paper. He tried to read the first wild account of the battle; his glasses became dim. He handed the paper to Evangeline.

"Read it aloud if you can," he said, "and tell me if it's as bad as they said."

"Then you knew?" Evangeline said. "You knew last night?"

"Yes. One of the officers of the pontoon train told me—he had been sent word. I was bound to silence. It has seemed like a lifetime. Read on." He lay back in his chair, his untasted breakfast pushed aside. "Our Navy! Good God! Our Navy, the pride of England, the envy of the world!"

Evangeline read aloud the whole of the first account of the news, its exaggerations, and its bitter truths. When she had finished reading, the doctor rose from his chair and left the room.

Half-an-hour later, when his wife went to him, he was on his knees in his study. God and the war were within its four walls, encompassing its space.

"Mary," he said, when she was slipping away, "come and pray with me for England."

While Mary was on her knees beside her husband, a little figure beside a very big one, Evangeline turned on Allan.

"Now you will go? Surely now you will go? Oh, suffering Christ, if only I were a man! How can you stay?"

Allan grasped her hand. "Tell me to go, Evangeline, and I will go." His eyes expressed a love for her which they had never held before. In her hands now lay the decision of their future.

She wrenched them away from him. "Go for me?" she cried. "Go for England, you mean! No, I will not tell you to go, never, never! Live your own life, succeed in your career, I am not the keeper of your soul!"

"We all go for some higher reason than ourselves. I will

go at your bidding. If I cared for you once, I care a thousand times more now, even if you have forgotten."

"But I don't bid you go—I am not England. Besides, the silly, romantic girl you knew has been burnt up in the war. Out of her ashes quite a new woman has arisen. Don't you see how the Arthurian world, which I used to love, the old, unreal world of romance and chivalry and legends and dreams, was a poor world compared to this suffering one, a toy world of toy knights and toy women? This world of suffering and altruism, this poor, crucified world, is the greatest which time has ever seen. We are living in the world in its grandest hour. No heroes have ever seen what our boys have seen, no sacrifice had any meaning until now, no patriotism."

Allan stood listening to her torrent of words. It fell from curling lips, her eyes were shining. She was too angry to be taken seriously, but she was glorious, a finer Evangeline than his imaginings had ever pictured, even when his senses had warred with his reason until he could scarcely endure it. Of all the fair Evangelines whom he had renounced, when the memory of her had goaded his senses nigh to madness, this Trojan woman was the most desirable. In her detachment from himself, and in her unreasoning scorn of his behaviour, she was so desirable that he determined to win her, win her at the cost of all that his career meant to him. He went from her tongue-tied and resolute.

CHAPTER II

A MONTH after that awful Saturday Allan Fairclough was to have joined the Royal Flying Corps. He had given up his junior partnership in a celebrated firm of West End ear-specialists. He was the youngest of the three men—the least important, if the hardest worked. His good appearance and ability had given him the position; the two elder partners had been on the look-out for a presentable young man with a little capital, who would take some of the burden off their shoulders. Allan, who had been working under one of them at a hospital, was just the man whom they needed. It was a chance in a thousand. Allan got it, and he proved all that his partners had hoped he would be.

But he could not stay with them. Evangeline's eyes forbade it. They came between him and his work on every possible occasion; they accused him in his sleep and destroyed his rest; they lashed him with scorn in his working-hours. In the end he determined to "join up."

While he was still a civilian, only one week before he was to begin his training, he went with a friend, who was to be his superior officer, to see over a large aerodrome in the South of England. He was passing a machine which had been just run out very close. He saw that the quickest way to reach his friend, who had left him for a few minutes to talk to one of his mechanics, was to turn sharp round it. He had gone unobserved by anyone.

The machine was motionless. Never dreaming of any danger and hearing his friend calling to him, he turned his head abruptly.

At that very instant, as he turned his head and swung his shoulders round, by the mysterious finger of fate, the mechanic, who was hidden from sight, set the machine in motion. The propeller began revolving, at heaven knowns what velocity. Catching Allan's turned head, it tore off half his face. His

right hand, which instinctively went up to save his eye, was also torn off. Still the propeller continued revolving, although a man's life had been ruined by its force in less than half a minute.

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Six months had passed since that almost unthinkable tragedy had happened. Allan was still in hospital. A battle between life and death had raged with grim persistence for the first three months. Those who saw the disfigured man thought that it would be kinder to him to let the power of death triumph. But youth is a host in itself, and Nature can work miracles.

The British Tommy, facing the foe, does not know when he is beaten. So it was with the youth in Allan. It did not know when it was beaten because it would not be beaten. Over and over again, when life was despaired of, his youth triumphed; it rose again from the dead. Three times Allan actually returned from the dead, or so his father said.

By the Easter of 1917 youth was triumphant. But not yet had Allan seen his own disfigurement, not yet did he know the pitiful condition of the man who had returned from the dead. Miracles of science had been wrought, it is true, in the grafting on of flesh and skin, with the help of merciful Nature. Yet still, even after six months, no one but his nurses and his father had been allowed to see his disfigurement. Few could have borne it.

During those six months, Evangeline had lived in an agony of remorse. His accident had been her fault! That was her cry. But for her, Allan would never have visited the aerodrome; but for her he would still have been relieving the misery of gun-deafened soldiers. She realized now how deafness isolated them and held them in a world of loneliness. Deafness with its accompanying solitude seemed to her now far less bearable than the sightlessness of the blind, for the blind are not cut off from the fellowship and sympathy of mankind; they do not live in a world apart. Deafness isolates; blindness gives a super-sight.

Her work as a gardener helped her. It saved her reason. Her passionate love of Nature and the wild open skies was a merciful ordaining. In the grounds of the hospital in which

she worked, her surroundings were glorious. Mountains, rivers, and lochs were all within reach of her fleet feet.

She had no knowledge of the awfulness of Allan's condition, even though she knew that he had lost his right eye and his right hand. She had no idea that there was scarcely a man in the great hospital for the limbless who would have exchanged places with him had they seen him. Both her mother and Allan's father had spared her the truth.

"Let us first see what Nature and science can do for him," the doctor had said, "before we torture still further her stricken youth. If only it had been a soldier's wound, if he had met this most hideous of calamities fighting, where others have met their glorious deaths!" That was his father's cry.

CHAPTER III

1917

ALEX was again making up her accounts. It was Saturday night, and she was seated as we left her four years ago, in her little office, adding up her weekly bills.

Horatius was now seventeen-and-a-half, well-developed and tall for his years. His country had accepted the truth of his statement that he was eighteen. This was his last night in St. Michael's Square. On Monday he was to join His Majesty's Forces, and begin his training for the cause.

Alex finished her accounts; Horatius had finished his last sum in addition of the weekly fees of the boarders in St. Michael's Club. His expression, which was open and candid, had been of value to him when he told his lie and took the oath of allegiance. For the last two years he had acted as butler and general factotum in the boarding-house. His pride in the place was unbounded; he looked upon it as a child of his own creation. He hated leaving it to the care of any casual fellow who might follow in his footsteps. No-one, he felt certain, would take his pride in laying the tables and in keeping the place like a small, well-run hotel; no-one would save his pretty mistress the trouble he did. His knowledge of her concerns and his interest in them had been of inestimable value to Alex.

"Well, good-bye, Horatius," Alex said, as the youth stood with suspiciously moist eyes waiting for his dismissal. "It will be all in keeping with my good luck if you get a 'Blighty' just enough to let you come back to St. Michael's Club for good. Remember, the post will be open to you—and a better one—if you should want it. We shall have to extend our premises again—I can see that."

"Thank you, ma'am," Horatius said. "I want to go to the front—I must go. But I don't like leaving you, and you'll be

so shorthanded, ma'am. And Master Tony—I feels for him just what I feel for the kids at home."

Alex smiled. "Never mind, something will turn up for me. It always does—you know my luck. The sun always shines twice as brightly after some horrid black day." She took his shy hand. "I remember so well, Horatius, how you came to my help the first night I had to make out the bills; I was in despair. Like Horatius of old, right nobly have you guarded the gate."

"I've done the accounts ever since, ma'am."

"Yes," Alex said, "for four years. Just think how we have grown and developed since then! Two houses now, packed with boarders! The war has increased the demand for my rooms, and I thought it would ruin me. Our worst fears are never realized, Horatius."

"Because you are so fine, ma'am," he said, "always thinking of your good luck and never noticing your misfortunes."

The youth's admiration pleased her. It was so sincere, so honest, and—although she did not know it—well-merited.

With a sudden turn on his heel, he went out of the room and left her. A soldier going to face the strongest foe the world has ever seen, must not cry, and tears were dangerously near. Besides, something had filled his throat; it had come suddenly from he did not know where.

"Good luck to you, Horatius!" Alex said. "I'll keep my eye on your mother and little Alf. If he's ever strong enough, he shall keep the gate until you return to your second home."

The door was shut and the boy had gone, gone to train for the boys' war, which is to liberate the world and imprison her war-lords.

Alex put her head between her two hands and thought with closed eyes. Another, and yet another had gone. Was this call on the youth of England, on its perfection of physique and manhood, never to stop? Was it only to stop when none but the halt and the lame and the blind were left? Just when this lad was old enough to really be of great help to his mother, he had gone from her, and Alex knew that she would not have had him stay, not even for the six months which were still hers by right of his age. Horatius knew Alex's business better than she knew it herself. His quick Cockney brains and re-

tentive memory had made him acquainted with the coming and going of almost every boarder who had ever lived in the house. He knew their failings and their virtues and their financial state.

Alex sat motionless. The house was in silence; all lights were out. Her factotum's departure had made her retrospective. Her mind travelled over the years of her residence in St. Michael's Square. She reviewed her prosperity with a calm and satisfied mind. How wonderful it had all been! How well fate had treated her! Since the war, how far less dreary and objectless her occupation had become, how different the lives of the women for whom she catered! They were all human beings now, all vitalized by the war. There was not an idle hand in the house. Every woman in it, young and old, was doing good and necessary work. Feeding them economically was practically war-work.

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It was almost eleven o'clock, but Alex was still thinking and reviewing her present position, as compared with her former life before she had started in her venture in St. Michael's Square.

She was twenty-eight years old now, but she was conscious of the fact that she looked much younger than she had done at Tregaron Manor, four years ago. Her youth had come back to her. It had been cheated of six precious years; it was making up for those years which her life in the log-hut had eaten up. It seemed to the boarders who watched her that each day she developed in beauty and in health. By nature Alex had been meant for a strong, healthy woman; her ill-health had been the result of the supertax on her strength between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four.

The last four years, in spite of the war, had been kindly years for Alex; she had the optimistic temperament, which views life from a gracious and not a grousing standpoint. She never made troubles out of trifles.

During these four years she had heard nothing of Larry. Often and often she had wondered what had become of him, if, by any chance, he had joined the Canadian Army and was fighting in France. He was no coward and he came of a fighting stock. But would his innate selfishness allow him to

step into such discomfort, to willingly endure hardships? She doubted it. She wished, for Tony's sake, that she could believe that he was fighting; she would have liked to think that her boy's father was in it. Even if he was a bad husband, he might be a very fine soldier. For her old love's sake, she hoped that he had not failed the land which had given him birth as he had failed the woman whom he had loved and who had given birth to his son.

She had not thought of these things so keenly until to-night. It was Horatius's going that recalled them, the fact that even her charwoman had more to be proud of than she had.

The telephone-bell startled her. It was late for it to ring. She took up the receiver, which was lying beside her on her desk. Her heart was beating, for no reason really, but the unexpected interruption to her reverie, and the lateness of the hour. She could scarcely hold the receiver to her ear.

"Is that 200, St. Michael's Square?" a voice said.

"Yes, this is the Ladies' Residential Club, St. Michael's Square."

"Can I speak to Mrs. Hemingway?"

"It is Mrs. Hemingway who is speaking."

"Oh!" There was a pause; someone was thinking out a message. Then the voice said, "This is 60790 Mayfair, Lady Wessex's private hospital. Can you hear? Wait a moment. I will ask them to clear the line, there is such a buzzing."

Alex waited. A thousand probabilities rushed through her mind. What could she be wanted for? Who could be in the hospital that she knew?

"Hallo!" she answered, when the voice asked again, "Are you there? Can you hear?—is that better?"

"Yes, I can hear quite distinctly."

"We have a soldier here who would like to see you. I promised to ring you up and ask you if you could come."

"Certainly I will. What is his name?" Alex's heart was now thumping against her side. She spoke breathlessly. What name would she hear?

"He is an American who has been in our Army ever since the beginning of the war, a private—Franklin Gibson. Do you know him?"

"Oh," Alex said, "of course I know him. Is he badly

wounded?" Her voice was scarcely audible at the other end of the telephone.

"I'm afraid he is. Could you come and see him to-morrow?"

"Yes. When can I come? At what time?"

"At three o'clock; you can see him for about half-an-hour. You must not stay longer; he is very weak."

"How long has he been in hospital?"

"Only two days. As soon as he was conscious he asked for you, if we could let you know. He had your address in his pocket-book. We think it may do him good to see you, if you will be careful not to excite or tire him."

"I will come," Alex said. "Tell him I will come."

"Good-night," the voice said. The next second there was silence, and Alex put down the receiver.

For half-an-hour she sat motionless, while her brain worked with an exhausting rapidity. She visualized over and over again the day when Franklin had said good-bye to her, the day before he went to France, the day he had walked down the street and left her standing on the doorstep, watching his disappearing figure. How well she remembered Horatius's words, for he too was watching him with admiring eyes.

"He won't look back, ma'am," he had said, "he won't look back."

Nor did he. He walked with bent head and hurrying footsteps down the long square. She had never seen him since.

For one moment he had folded her in his arms in that very room. He had asked for no response, yet she had raised her lips to his. They were his, and for one eternal moment Franklin Gibson drank deeply of the Kingdom of Heaven. Surely he deserved her fond embrace, and she, as a woman, had she not the right to bestow it upon this soldier, who, while belonging to a still neutral country, was going to fight side by side with her countrymen in the trenches? He was eager and willing to lay down his life for the cause of humanity. A beautiful and very feminine humanity had been her thanks to him for his sacrifice.

CHAPTER IV

PUNCTUALLY at three o'clock the following day Alex found herself being taken up in a lift to Ward A3 in Lady Wessex's Hospital in Curzon Street. Lady Wessex was the American wife of an English peer, who had married her for her millions and fallen in love with her after their marriage for her charm and sweetness of character.

When the war broke out and she discovered that great numbers of her fellow-countrymen were fighting in France on the side of the Allies, she took one of the finest mansions in Mayfair—there were many to let at the time, owing to financial difficulties brought about by the war—and soon converted it into one of the most perfectly-equipped private hospitals in the Kingdom. Her V.A.D. staff consisted for the greater part of American girls domiciled in London.

Alex was not prepared for such magnificence as surrounded her directly the big front door was opened. To reach the lift which was to take her up to Ward A3, she had to pass through a stately hall, from which branched off a staircase wide enough and low enough in gradient for a mediæval procession of cardinals and cardinals' secretaries, and all the stupendous retinue of the pompous Vatican days, to sweep down without indignity or lack of grace.

The girl who took Alex up in the lift was dressed in an overall of lettuce-green silk. Alex's quick eye detected the perfect art in its apparent simplicity. A heavy necklace of yolk-of-egg amber beads hung from her slender throat.

A little amazed at all the beauty of her surroundings, Alex stepped out of the lift on to the first landing, where a V. A. D., spotlessly aproned and becomingly capped, conducted her to A3 Ward. When she reached the door she stopped.

Alex was astonished at the magnificence and almost royal splendour of the house, its mural decorations of tapestries and old paintings, some of them the originals of coloured prints with which she had been familiar all her life.

The V.A.D. entered the room while Alex waited outside the door. Presently she returned, accompanied by the Day-Sister of the Ward.

When the sister saw Alex, she said, "I'm so glad you have come. The doctor thinks it is his only hope, the one thing that may rouse him."

"Oh!" Alex said. "Is he as bad as that?"

"He is terribly weak. In France he had so many operations—septic poisoning from shrapnel. And now he seems not to care. If only you could rouse him, make him want to live!" The delicate-eyed woman looked at Alex. Her manner seemed to say, "We trust to you to do this for us. We have done all that care and skill can do—love must do the rest."

She had recognized Alex as the original of a little blood-stained photograph which lay in a breast-pocket-book in Private Gibson's bedside locker. It was one which Alex had had taken, at his request, before he left for France.

"I will leave you with him," the sister said, "and Nurse Deland will tell you when you must go."

"Thank you," Alex said. "I feel rather nervous. I have never seen anyone very, very ill. I hope I shan't do him more harm than good."

"I don't think you will. Just keep the thought uppermost in your mind that you are there to help us, and not to excite him. Try not to look shocked at the change you will see in him—remember, he has been at death's door for many weeks."

Alex, by a supreme effort, strung herself up to meet the situation. The ordeal was a trying one. She was not a relative of the sick man, and could not behave as his lover.

She had to walk the whole length of a very long room to reach Private Gibson's bed. As she walked she looked at the occupant of each bed to see if it was Franklin. When she reached the end of the ward, she was going to turn back and walk down the other side, for she had not seen him, when Nurse Deland who had been busy with the dressing of a wound when she entered the ward, came to her assistance: "He is there." She nodded towards a bed, the third from where they stood. "You are Mrs. Hemingway?" she asked.

"Yes," Alex said. "But that is not *my* friend, Mr. Gibson."

"I'm afraid it is, Mrs. Hemingway. I will take you to him."

When they reached the bed, the nurse went close up to the patient and said, "Gibson, your friend has come to see you. Can you speak to her?"

As she spoke, she pulled back the clothes from his face, so that Alex could see him more distinctly.

Alex had expected to see an agonized, shattered-looking man, but not an object like the one that lay before her on the narrow bed. The big-framed Franklin Gibson whom she had known had changed into a shrivelled, ugly yellow thing, inhuman in its stillness. The large face, with its rugged features, had shrunk almost to nothing; the clear, inquisitive eyes had fallen back into his head. This was a ghastly mockery of a man! It bore no resemblance to the one whom she had known, whose most striking characteristics had been his physical fitness and intellectual inquisitiveness.

Five yellow fingers, like the claw of a dead turkey, fumbled their way above the bedclothes. Alex took the ghastly thing in her warm supple hands and held it. Her pale hands, that he loved, were mockingly human compared to the yellow thing they held.

As his tired eyes recognized her, an expression of relief humanized them. It was the only emotion he was capable of expressing. He looked from Alex to the nurse, who instantly bent forward. He wished to speak to her. It was to ask her to give him some drops of the liquid which for a short time permitted him to think clearly and gave him strength to speak.

When he had swallowed the drops, the nurse left him, and Alex sat down on a chair which the nurse had placed for her near the bed.

A painted ceiling, gay with classic figures, smiled down upon the sick man on the white bed. Pan and a trio of laughing girls frolicked and played in the sunlight. Their mockery hurt Alex.

"He will rally in a few minutes," the nurse said before she went away. "The excitement of waiting for you has exhausted him. There is something important he wishes to say,

I imagine, so I should advise you just to wait without speaking until he begins. He has asked for you so often."

Alex nodded her head in response to the nurse's advice. Indeed, she did not know what to say or do. She was quite unused to illness. How could she really feel that this yellow skeleton, with a head and neck so thin that every bone showed almost as clearly as the bones of a skull, was the same man who had held her in his strong arms on the day of their parting? She waited in perfect silence for some minutes, while her eyes took in each detail of the luxuriously-appointed ward. After a little time, and when still nothing happened, she determined to see if he was aware of her presence; she would let go his cold fingers, withdraw her hands.

Instantly pleading eyes were turned to her, anxious eyes, like the eyes of a lonely dog.

Alex's feelings changed. She bent her head and pressed his cold fingers to her lips, as though asking forgiveness for her thoughts. To her surprise, she felt a slight tremor run through the sick man. She kept her lips pressed to his fingers; her breath would warm them; her strong womanhood, so close to his ebbing manhood, might give him vitality. He must be fed by her strength. She braced herself to will him back to health. She had so much to offer from the fountain of her vitality and womanhood.

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Her will, or the drops which the nurse had administered, did their work. With her head bent low, and her lips pressed on his hands, she was listening with all her senses to what he was telling her—her eyes as well as her ears, her heart and her very bowels, seemed to have been given the power of hearing. Every sense of her was listening to the words which seemed to travel to her from "the clear seat and remote throne of souls."

"Fate arranges these things strangely, beloved," he said. "It fell to my lot to save your husband's life . . . he was wounded."

A kiss of still greater tenderness was Alex's only answer. But for Franklin there was no anguish of love which is love's true perfection in her kiss. Death was too near, passion too remote.

"Your husband was lying by the road-side as our company

came along. . . . He was bleeding to death. Able officers are too valuable to be left as soldiers must be left, and are left . . . two of us were despatched to bring bearers . . . the other man never reached the R.A.M.C."

"Yes," Alex said. Her voice was dull and stricken. "You gave your life for his, a good life for a worthless one. Oh, Franklin!"

"He was yours," he said faintly. "Two of us were asked to volunteer . . . knowing he was yours, could I have refused? . . . He is the father of your son."

"There were others—they could have gone."

"They did not know . . . to me he was the husband of the woman I love . . . on his death or life did not hang the brightness or darkness of their days. If he died you were free?"

"And you knew him? How did you know him?"

"I met him at Havre before the offensive. I learnt then who he was."

"You are talking too much," Alex said. "Tell me more another time." Indeed, she wished to hear no more. How could she guard him against excitement if she herself could not control or hide her emotion? The nurse had said that she was to remember that she was there to help them, and not excite him.

"No, no. There may be no other chance. You have lent me strength, I must use it. . . . I must speak and tell you all while I can. I don't know where he is now, but with care he would recover. He was shot through the shoulder and wounded in one foot."

"Yes," Alex said. She spoke unfeelingly. Her mind was travelling far and fast. What logic did life hold? Why this turn of the wheel? Why should honour have demanded that this fine man, whose great pleasure in life lay in helping others, should lay down his life for a man who up till now had spent his in idleness and selfish pleasures? Why, because the good man loved the idle man's wife, should it have been incumbent on him to save his life?

Wound in and out of these thoughts was a gladness that Tony's father had not failed his country. For that at least she need never feel shame. But mixed up with the dull sort of

gladness which the knowledge gave her was her anger against Fate. The pity and waste of it, that the man who was worth a thousand Larry's, had given his life for him and had brought him back into her own life.

"You will find more details in my diary," the sick man said. "I must use this false strength for essential things." He looked at her with the eyes of a man who had committed his soul to his God. "This is borrowed strength, beloved," he said wearily. "It won't last. When I am gone, Alex, you will find yourself a rich woman . . . not a millionairess—I have spared you that," he tried to smile. "I should like you to promise me that you will live at Tregaron, that you will make it your home."

"Oh!" Alex said. "But you must live . . . you must not die . . . you will recover."

He heard her suppressed sobs. "Don't, dear. Let me ask you something else. Will you put all the treasures I have left you in one room in your home, and call that room after me, give it my name?"

"My dearest, my dearest," Alex said—her voice was broken; she could not hide her agitation—"you are going to get quite well. The nurse told me that it was only strength you required. She asked me to come and see you, to give you some of my strength. I was not to let you tire yourself."

"Beloved, you cannot give me the desire to live—the right is not yours to give."

Alex's reason rebelled. Was it not he himself who had robbed her of the right to give it? Was it not he himself who had brought Larry back again into both their lives? Had he not saved him from a death which would have been more honourable than all the deeds of his life? She could not speak her thoughts; they were her own, caused by the years of embittered youth.

"Without that desire to live, surely it is better for a useless soldier to pass on to 'lands undiscoverable in the unheard-of west'? Don't try to hold me to earth, dearest."

Alex was torn with doubts. He wanted to pass on, he was half away from her already. Yet it was her duty to urge him to live.

"I think it is because you are so ill and weak that you feel like this." She did not think so, but for lack of other words,

she felt that that was the correct thing to say. "Get strong, Franklin, and you will find that the old life will be very sweet again." She hated her insincerity. His eyes reproached her. "Has the war taught you so little?" they seemed to say to her. "Is it only in France that there is naked truth?" The unimaginable horrors which the waste of war had revealed to him showed for one moment in his haunted eyes. They alarmed her.

"The old life you speak of is gone, Alex. Where is it to be found? The world which knew not war is as far away from us as the days when Evangeline's fancy knights imagined themselves brave warriors."

"When you are better you will see," Alex said. She tried to speak buoyantly. "You will see what the soul of the war has done for England, and what it is going to do when the war is over. Most of us see now what you always saw. We have all been at school, learning and studying the new religion of humanity, discovering a new heaven and the new earth."

"I should like to live to see the real meaning of this war, its meaning as a part of the great rule, the ordained cause."

"Oh, you will! The old men won't, but you will, Franklin."

A slight movement of his head from side to side spoke an eloquent denial of her words. The nurse was coming towards them.

"I think you must go now," she said to Alex.

At her bidding Alex promptly rose from her seat. She was terribly afraid of tiring or exciting Franklin; she was not anxious to remain; she felt that it would be wiser to go at once.

"I have one more thing to say, please." He looked at the nurse and then went on: "You will have no trouble, Alex. I took all the necessary precautions to see that everything is in perfect order. What I have left you will scarcely be missed out of all that might have been yours, but it will enable you to live luxuriously."

Emotion kept Alex silent. In this brief interview, which might be their last, she had to be mindful of the fact that while there is life there is hope; that any undue excitement might destroy that hope, wreck his chance of life.

For one moment she knelt down by his side and laid her head on his pillow; her lips were close to his ear.

"Don't die, dearest," she said softly, "live for my sake. Don't leave me all alone . . . my world is so empty."

"You will take him back," he said. "He has fought and bled for England . . . you must take him back, Alex."

For answer, she pressed her lips on his. "You tell me to?" she murmured. "You ask me to do this?"

"Yes," he said, "because to me you are holier than all holy days or things."

Alex shivered. Was she to give her word? A death-bed promise was binding, haunting. The spirit of the dead demand their pound of flesh.

"He must come back to you and I must go from you. Good-bye, beloved."

"Where is Larry?" she said helplessly.

"Somewhere in hospital. You will find him?" The words were spoken with difficulty; the false vitality was quickly ebbing away.

Alex rose from her kneeling position and at the nurse's bidding silently slipped from the ward. The sick man scarcely noticed her absence.

* * * * * *

CHAPTER V

EVANGELINE was wheeling a barrowful of garden-rubbish across one of the wide stretches of old mossy turf in the grounds of Lincluden Hospital. She had to take it across a gravel path and over another lawn to reach the pile of weeds and refuse which was going to be made into a bonfire. To avoid a patient's carriage-chair which was coming along the path, she had to cross it at a rather dangerous speed. The chair which was coming was one of the newest type, which turn and move about with extraordinary ease and rapidity. She tried to hurry across the path. The turf edge of the lawn over which she had to take the barrow was at least two inches above the level of the path, and as the barrow reached the gravel, the handles slipped from her grasp and it toppled over. Its contents were spilt in a wild disorder right across the path.

Evangeline cried out "Stop!"

The soldier in the chair had seen the accident and had pulled up in good time. The next moment a blushing and embarrassed Rosalind was standing beside him, apologising profusely for her clumsiness. After she had been speaking rapidly for a few moments, a look of questioning and speculation changed the expression of her face. Something was stirring in her memory. The soldier was young and fair; even his ill-fitting hospital uniform did not disguise his air of good breeding.

As Evangeline looked at him more interestedly, because of the subtle suggestion of resemblance to someone whom she had formerly known or seen under unusual circumstances, he blushed until his cheeks were almost as scarlet as his neck-tie.

"We have met before," he said, "but, of course, you don't recognize me?"

Evangeline's straight eyebrows were drawn closer together. She had seen so many new faces during the last two years; perhaps this good-looking Tommy only resembled some other soldier, or she might have seen him before in a casual sort of way. He saw her look of uncertainty.

"Do you remember placing a wreath of forget-me-nots on St. David's tomb?"

"Oh!" Evangeline cried. "Were you that curate?"

"I was," he said, "a very bad curate." He smiled, and when he smiled, youth illuminated his face.

"You have been fighting? Or were you only chaplain?" With the last suggestion her voice fell; she hoped not.

"I have been fighting," he said.

"How splended! I am so glad! I wish all curates would do the same. But however did you recognize me?" Evangeline's breathless sentences were expressive of the girl he remembered so vividly. She had come to life again.

He blushed foolishly. How could he tell her that once having seen her, no man could forget her? How could he tell her that in Flanders he had over and over again seen the blue of her eyes in the skies, and the darkness of her lashes and hair in the hurrying clouds?

"I have a good memory for faces." His words were conventional. It was a poor, inexpressive remark to make, while his heart was beating in such an absurd manner. This was all he had to say now that the girl was standing talking to him, the girl who had refined his thoughts and haunted his memory for almost four years!

"St. David's seems a hundred centuries ago," she said. "You have awakened a memory of a former incarnation."

"In a way it does seem centuries ago. One wonders how there ever could have been a world of such inaction and peace and . . ." He paused, ". . . useless living."

"Tell me," she said, "how did you manage to go to the front? You had a mother . . ." she hesitated, for her memory was suddenly flooded with the whole scene which had been enacted between them at St. David's.

"Ah! You remember?" He spoke eagerly, gladly.

"Yes, I do, almost everything we did and said. I was awfully young." She laughed. "Do you remember the ducks standing on their heads? I do. Do you remember how I said I wished humans could do the same, for their attitude expressed their satisfaction? And do you remember how I said I never had done anything in life which I didn't want to do, and you said

you were doing things you didn't want to all the time—at least—I knew you meant that from what you didn't say?"

"Yes, I remember," he said. His heart was pounding against his sides. "It was a gloriously bright day. Do you remember the forget-me-nots?"

"And how we made the wreath with Tony and we never met you the next Sunday after all, when we went to the Welsh Service? But you had watered the wreath and it was beautiful."

"I planted it when the flowers were faded. It had thrown out long roots in the saucer. The seeds of it still sow themselves and come up every year—quite a big patch of forget-me-nots is dedicated to St. David."

"Oh, how nice of you!" Evangeline said, while the colour flew to her cheeks. The soldier's eyes had told her more than his words.

"My sister looks after it," he said, apologetically. "The war has cured her; she is doing hard work in St. David's."

"How splendid!" Evangeline said. "What was the matter with her?"

"She had a breakdown at Cambridge. She had overworked herself for years on end. Her education never cost my mother a penny ever since she was quite a child. She took scholarship after scholarship, and then the breakdown came just before her final triumph at Cambridge. It was awfully hard lines. But the war has absolutely cured her, given her lots to do which hasn't needed any brain-effort or nerve-strain."

They were talking together like old friends who had met after a long absence. Evangeline was seated on the shaft of her barrow, her slim, brown-gaitered legs crossed with the freedom of a boy's.

"My mother is doing war-work too. They are both quite independent and as happy as the war will allow any of us to be."

Evangeline's eyes expressed her understanding; he had meant that he was no longer burdened by their maintenance.

"When I was free I resigned my curacy and joined up."

Evangeline looked at his legs, which were wrapped up in a thick rug. One of his feet appeared to be wounded, for it projected beyond the rug and it was swathed in white bandages.

"Your Blighty," she said, "what is it?"

"My right foot."

"What is the matter with it?" For the moment Evangeline forgot that only limbless cases were taken in Lincluden Hospital.

"Gone," he said. "It was amputated a month ago. It's going on all right."

"You've lost it?" she said. As she spoke, from some hidden depth of her being rushed the memory of the high cliffs and wild coast beyond the peaceful valley of St. David's. She remembered his half-confession that only by his wild wanderings on those rugged cliffs could he find freedom for his imprisoned soul. She could see herself, running by his side with the fleet feet of youth, back to the old ruins of the Bishop's Palace. And mixed with these visions, suggested by them, came Allan's tragedy, the regret that his cruel wound had not been received on the battle-field. Her storm of thoughts and the emotions they aroused kept her tongue-tied. What could she say? What does anyone ever say which expresses the palest shadow of what they feel for youth maimed and blinded and shattered by the war?

He saw her confusion, her anxiety to offer the sympathy she felt. He could not imagine her without one of her two feet; he supposed she felt the same about him. He was all anxiety to comfort her.

"A foot," he said, "is really nothing in these days. In this hospital, I feel almost a fraud."

"Oh, I know," she said. "And yet it just spoils everything—things can never be the same again. You can't live the same life."

"I don't want to live the same life."

"Was the yoke of affection heavier than a wooden foot?"

"The yoke of blindness was," he said.

Evangeline looked at him. His words baffled her.

"I was blind to everything in life, except my own wild desire to live, to be free, to hurl my head at any stone wall that obstructed my path. I was just as much a slave to my own desires as I thought I was a slave to order and rule and ceremony."

"And now?" Evangeline's voice suggested sadness. Was this yet another falcon with clipped wings, as Alex always called Evangeline?

"And now," he said, "I know that these things don't mean real freedom. I was a slave to my own limited interests. We can

be greater slaves to ourselves than to anyone else—don't you think so?"

"The whole world is in bondage," Evangeline said. "How can anyone be free?"

"You don't really think that," he said. "Every man's freedom lies within himself; no exterior influence can make or unmake his freedom. He always builds the walls of his own prison."

"No German is free," she said, evasively. She was not fully understanding him.

"We don't know. German military rule makes us see them as slaves. But remember, conscientious objectors are compelled to fight side by side with the willing. But even then their soul remains their own. No power on earth can destroy the freedom of even a German's soul. If I had to go back to St. David's again, I shouldn't feel as I did."

"The war changes everything and everyone," Evangeline said; her words were regretful. "If peace does ever come, how tame and slow and wise everyone will be! No standing on our heads like the ducks at St. David's!" Her lips laughed, while her eyes were grave.

"We shall all be changing together," he said. "We shall all have so many delightful 'Do you remembers?' to discuss, of the piping days of peace—that will help, don't you think?"

"That's true," she said laughingly. "I'm old enough and wise enough now to love 'Do you remember?' "

"Do you remember," he said, "the Welsh Service at St. David's —the music of their voices, the beauty of the language when it is sung?"

"I do," she said. "And you never turned up! You proved faithless. What a musical race the Welsh are! By the way, there are often quite good concerts in the hospital—do you enjoy them?"

"We had one last night. You weren't there? I didn't see you."

"No, I was busy writing my weekly letter to my mother. I hear there is one man who sings awfully well. One of the nurses told me he really has a beautiful tenor. Have you heard him?"

"One or two men sing quite well. We have some professionals."

"Are you musical?" she asked. "Do you appreciate the modern music, the new revolutionary music, one might almost call it?"

"I'm awfully fond of music, but the war has changed my taste even in that. Before I went into the Army, I adored the new Russian music. The more advanced, the better I liked it; it was fuel to my hatred of the old order of things, I suppose. I had a great friend at Cambridge who, in a measure, educated me up to it." He paused. "I don't know exactly how it is, but the order and method of military training has got hold of me. I see the need of absolute authority. Its discipline has become a sort of passion with me, and the stronger the feeling has become, the less I care to hear the strange, disconnected, unorderly, revolutionary composition, which once interested and held me. Much of it seems to me now as youthful as my own undisciplined mind of four years ago. I have become a devotee of Bach and Beethoven. Can you follow what I mean? I am so bad at expressing my ideas, but it is all perfectly clear and logical to me in my own mind."

"Oh, yes," Evangeline said, "I know what you mean quite well."

"Can you understand how and why the change has come about?"

"I think I can," she said.

"The absolute order of military life undoubtedly affects one. It becomes as amazing and fascinating to a military student as the study of the rules which govern the forces of Nature are to a scientist—the linking together of every rule until the ones you thought most unnecessary and absurd take their place in some supreme action."

"I do understand what you mean, and yet I don't quite see how it should have so affected a man like yourself. I thought you were something like myself in these matters. I hate living by rule and convention."

"But you yourself," he said, "before the war you wouldn't have enjoyed going through this daily routine of work."

"I don't enjoy it now," she said laughingly. "I really only enjoy not enjoying it. I enjoy the feeling that I am doing some-

thing I dislike, something that takes the freedom out of my days, so that I may suffer a little, while you are all suffering so much. I think I enjoy every ache and pain and feeling of over-tiredness, as much as I hate the monotony of brushing leaves and digging borders and weeding. I want to kick the barrow over a hundred times a day, just as I spilt it so ignominiously as you came along."

The ex-curate laughed sympathetically.

"And if I don't go about my business now," she said, "I shall catch it! What a long time we have been talking!"

"Have we?" he said. In his heart he said, "What a little time after four years of waiting."

"Yes. I must count it as my twenty minutes off at eleven o'clock."

"When can we meet again?"

"You will be out and about, and I shall be in the grounds somewhere. I won't throw a barrowful of rubbish across your path again, I promise you."

"Do anything you choose," he said, "so long as we can have another chat. I have enjoyed it so much."

"We will have some more 'Do you remembers?'" she said. "We are getting dreadfully old! I will think of some for our next meeting."

He watched the mass of rubbish being thrown back into the barrow. Evangeline's quick movements and slender limbs were certainly a treat for weary eyes. He had never seen a girl wear khaki coat and breeches as she wore them. Until now he had not liked or particularly admired the practical costume. When the barrow was re-loaded she smiled a friendly good-bye, and the invalid moved his carriage swiftly towards a sunny and sheltered corner where he could feed tranquilly on his thoughts.

CHAPTER VI

EVANGELINE and her fellow-gardeners received an invitation to the next concert which was given to the soldiers in the limbless hospital. It was to consist of local effort.

With something of her old care, Evangeline looked over the frock she was going to wear. It was rather an event for her to get into feminine attire once more. As a rule she was only too ready for bed when her day's work was done; she did not trouble to change her khaki uniform for a house-frock. To-night, for a reason which lay hidden in her consciousness and because she was still young, she was making herself, as she expressed it, "look as presentable as possible;" she could not hope to look any better than that in one of her old "dug-outs."

A very presentable appearance it was, as she entered the long gallery of the great hospital where the concert was to be held. Most men thought so, at any rate, and she herself felt that for a pre-war gown it was rather astonishing. What she looked like, as she passed along the aisle of the hall to reach her seat, which had been reserved for her, was a moving cloud dropped from a blue April sky. Of course, the ex-curate knew the moment she entered the hall; he felt as well as saw her arrival. He was to sing that night. She was to hear his voice for the first time.

He had seen her twice since the incident of the spilt barrow in the grounds of the hospital. What they had said to each other does not matter, for it is not the things which any woman says that make a man fall in love with her. What she says always seems to him remarkable, and Evangeline never needed to say very much; her victims were hers by silent conquest and by the language of her eyes. Indeed, they had had little opportunity of saying much that mattered, for on both occasions Evangeline had been accompanied by one of the other two gardeners, and they had stuck to her with the persistency of the unwanted.

To-night her dark head and pale blue frock were just within sight of Hugh Tennant. From his chair he could see her by turning his head well round to the left. Later on in the evening, after he had sung, he would run his chair closer to where she sat, if he came out of the ordeal sufficiently creditably.

The long hall presented a wonderful sight. Lined up on either side of its walls were the patients who were well enough to enjoy the performance. They were in long chairs, or reclining at full length on low divans, or sitting upright in invalid chairs like Hugh's, which they wheeled about. The most expensive chairs were miracles of lightness and responsiveness to touch. The hall was full of soldiers; men with no legs or one leg; men with no arms, or one arm; men with one arm and one leg; men with one hand and men with no hands; men with no feet and no arms—every conceivable limbless victim of the war was there. They only, of course, represented the convalescent inmates of the superb hospital. Upstairs, in the silent wards, lay the men whose condition did not allow them, even had they wished it, to join in the festivity.

A man with both legs gone, who had once been an agile comedian in a London music-hall, opened the programme. He gave a musical recitation and variety entertainment, which brought down the house with laughter. With pathetic agility, he rested his crutches, upon which he had been balancing himself a moment before, against the side of the piano and seated himself on the piano-stool. His poor stumps of legs reached no further than a little child's. He was a born comedian and entertainer; the loss of his two legs had not robbed him of his humour.

For an encore he gave a sketch which he had written himself of life in a hospital-ward, from a Tommy's point of view. Evangeline knew that it was absolutely life-like, and amazingly daring. The matron and the nurses would certainly have resented it if it had been less witty.

The next item was a violin-solo. The violinist had been a member of the London Philharmonic Society orchestra. Evangeline knew that his selection of music would please her friend, the ex-curate; it was too classical for the majority. So far she had not seen Hugh.

After the violinist's performance, which was all that she had

expected, and certainly gave pleasure and satisfaction to the musical members of the audience, an enormous Scotsman gave imitations of Harry Lauder. They were such perfect imitations that Evangeline was amazed at the cleverness of the performance. The man's voice had most of the charm which won for Harry Lauder his sudden popularity; he had also the same broad, ingenuous smile and expression. The enthusiasm of the wounded men was delightful to watch. Crutches beat the ground; hands were clapped by those who had two hands to clap with, while laughter echoed through the great hall. Evangeline wondered if it had ever, in the days of peace and splendour, held a lighter-hearted, a more enthusiastic gathering of people. Yet everyone in it, with the exception of the staff and one or two guests who had been invited, had lost a limb. There was not a man in the cheery audience who would ever be whole-bodied again.

Tears and laughter struggled for supremacy with Evangeline. The men were all so happy that she need not have cried; but the pity of it tore at her heart. So much youth battered and maimed! She remembered how she had struggled to hide her feelings the first time that she had been in the wards. A big giant of a fellow had, with extraordinary agility, slipped from his crutches to the floor to unfasten his locker. He wished to show her a photograph of his family. He had thrown his crutches across the bed and was supporting himself with his hands against it. The shock it had given her, to see him balanced on the ground on the trunk of his body, brought tears into her eyes. The man saw them; he had grown accustomed to what so horrified her.

"I'm not so bad as many are," he said. "And you see, I shall get twenty-five shillings a week for life."

"Oh," Evangeline cried, while the tears splashed uncontrollably down her cheeks, "what is twenty-five shillings a week compared to your legs?"

"Have you ever thought what it is," the man said, "to be a working man and the father of a young family, and to know that if anything happened to you, if you became invalided for life, there was not a soul but the mother of your kids to work for them and you?"

While Evangeline looked at him, for some unknown reason

the figure and face of Franklin Gibson, standing on the rock above Merlin's Pool at Tregaron, rose clearly before her eyes.

"I don't believe I ever did think before the war," she said.

"Well," he went on, "I often used to think that it was a mad act to marry and bring little ones into the world with the risk of leaving them to the barest poverty—for try as he may, a working-man with a young family couldn't save; it was impossible."

"I'm sure it was."

"And now," he said, "I've got no legs, that's true enough, but for as long as I live I've got twenty-five shillings a week clear. That would keep the kids if I couldn't get work. But I can get a good job if I go into the workshop here and learn. I can save a bit. Legs isn't the worst thing to lose—anyone will tell you that hands are far worse."

Since that day Evangeline had reconstructed her ideas of a working man's views of life. To-night their cheery happiness and their enthusiasm gave her an exquisite pain.

To her surprise, when the next item on the programme was due, she saw Hugh Tennant wheel his chair from somewhere unseen out into the centre aisle of the gallery. It spun down to where the piano stood at the other end of the hall at a great pace. His footless leg would not allow of his hanging it, so he could not stand on crutches.

"What is he going to do?" Evangeline wondered. Her heart had begun to beat rather foolishly. His performance was a personal thing to her; she had to recognize that. The other performers had been professionals, all except the double of Harry Lauder. How would her friend stand the test of comparison?

Until he began her heart went on sledge-hammering in the most annoying fashion. It was betraying to her what she would not have allowed herself to acknowledge. Hugh had started the well-known ballad, "She is far from the Land." Before he had sung the opening lines, she gave a deep soft sigh of relief. He was all right. There was no doubt about his voice; there could be no doubt about its effect on his audience. The surprising beauty of it, its almost unearthly quality, brought a lump to her throat. Hugh's voice had made many less emotional people than herself cry; she need not have fought so hard to repress the unexpected tears.

When Evangeline had asked him if he had heard the soldier with the beautiful voice sing, she had of course been referring, if she had only known it, to himself. How amused he must have been! She wondered why he had chosen "She is far from the Land." It was not a tenor song.

A beautiful pride flooded her listening being, the pride of the secret sympathy between herself and the singer. She knew that no one in the room was so closely in touch with him as herself. Although he might not have seen her, he was anxious for her approval, even above his desire to please the soldiers. Evangeline's eyes never left his face until the song was finished. The sudden knowledge that he could sing like that raised him infinitely higher in her estimation. He was an artist, as well as a soldier who had been wounded. He possessed something superlative, something which she would for ever admire and envy. Possessing a voice like that lifted him right above the common ruck of mankind. Even if he had remained only a curate, he would have been something great as well.

The song was finished. The modest cripple who had sung it was wheeling himself back to his former place. But not quite; he managed to overshoot the mark and pull up within easy speaking distance of the girl with blue eyes and the dark hair, whom the men he had been sitting next to had admired, and to whom he had been singing.

Evangeline's congratulations were given with glowing enthusiasm.

"I never knew that you possessed any voice at all!" she said laughingly. "Fancy having a voice like that and being a curate at St. David's! Why on earth didn't you use it?"

"I couldn't afford the training necessary for professional singing, or the sums of money which you have to pay after you have trained, if you want to get a hearing. And, after all, it was owing to St. David's that I can sing even as I do."

"How was that?"

"Because the organist and choir-master at the cathedral became a great friend of mine. He helped me all he could; he was quite a good singing-master."

"I should say he was!" Evangeline said. "But what material he had to work upon! A voice like yours would be very easily overtrained. It's perfect as it is."

"I am glad you like it," he said. "A great voice producer, when he heard me sing a little time ago, was kind enough to say that instinctively I produced my voice properly. He said that Nature had been awfully good to me, and advised me to be satisfied with it as it is. I was horribly nervous to-night."

"A lark might as well be nervous. How foolish!"

"I haven't my music here. I sang that song because it was the only one I could find that I knew and the accompanist could play. It isn't a tenor song, of course."

"Do you know," Evangeline said, "the moment you began to sing I found myself crying—it was so unexpectedly beautiful. It sounded just like a pure voice from heaven. Can you hear yourself how it sounds?"

"Oh, you're too kind," he said.

"No, I'm not. I never flatter. And oh! how I envy you! Fancy having an instrument inside your own body which can produce music like that! You can sing to yourself on the hills and in the valleys and in any kind of old place you choose! You can become detached from the world when you feel too war-weary."

"Oh, no, I can't," he said.

"Why not?"

"I can't tell you. I have no voice worth listening to in ugly surroundings, or with unsympathetic people listening. I am a slave to atmospheric conditions."

"Oh," Evangeline said, "your voice belongs to the Welsh hills. You are Welsh, aren't you? No Englishman I ever heard sings with so much temperament."

"On my mother's side I am Welsh—I was born in Wales—but my father was Lancashire."

"The best blend for music," Evangeline said. "Bother it! We must stop talking." She looked at him with glowing eyes. "Will you sing again?"

"I suppose I shall be asked to."

Evangeline nodded. "Do please!" she said eagerly. "How lovely!"

When the pianoforte solo was finished, Hugh whispered to her, "There is really no music here that I know—absolutely nothing except 'The Messiah,' and that is too serious."

"Oh," Evangeline said, " 'Comfort ye my people,' that would be glorious. How I'd love to hear you sing it!"

He shook his head. "You can any day, if you like, but not to-night."

"Perhaps it would be too much," she said. "I don't know that the situation would stand it. I know that I should cry like anything, but that sort of crying is the most perfect enjoyment there is, isn't it?"

"I doubt if I could sing it to these men. They want 'bucking up'—you know what I mean. Laughter is healthier for them than any exquisite pain."

"Yes, I know. Poor dears, how I love them all! Don't they make you feel proud of our Empire? You can't find a depressed or clouded face amongst them."

"They have all seen hell," he said. "They know how good it is to be in paradise. I know I do."

Another item on the programme was starting. It was an old English glee sung by a quartette of nurses. Instantly Evangeline was transplanted to the Chalice Hostel at Glastonbury. The years of war had rolled back; she was standing with Allan listening to the same glee, sung in the picturesque room in the ex-monastery. The unreality of it all, mingled with its charm and spiritual atmosphere, separated her while the glee lasted from her immediate surroundings. She could even see the cardboard crown covered with gilt paper lying on the stage of the theatre where the morality plays were rehearsed and acted. She could see the great cross which represented unity on the whitewashed chapel wall.

When the glee came to an end she found herself again sitting in the hospital concert-hall. She was promising Hugh to practice some accompaniments for him on Saturday afternoons. It would fall in nicely with the visiting hours at the hospital. He would then sing to her as much as she liked and he would try to learn some new songs for the next concert. The hospital was liberally supplied with pianos and very old music.

It had been an extraordinarily happy evening for Hugh and Evangeline. Everything that Evangeline did and said made her in his eyes charming and wonderful. He had never, or so he assured himself, thought that she was half so womanly or enchanting. This was far from the truth, of course, for he had

pictured her over and over again as a creature possessed of the graces and charm of a thousand women rolled into one. She was so nice to *him*—that was the strange thing. He said to himself that any girl so outstandingly clever and pretty should take the trouble to be so nice to a man like himself proved what a really good sort she was. And it had not been only on account of his voice; he was glad of that; for she had made herself equally delightful to him before she knew that he possessed any voice at all. He thanked God for his voice; he hugged it to himself in his thoughts as a precious and lucky possession. It had never meant anything like what it meant to him now. It was the one and only thing he possessed which all other men had not. Rich men could give her the things a girl like that deserved and ought to have; he could only give her his voice, his whole voice, for without her it would behave as it did when the world held no beauty.

Of course he did not pause to think where the charm of Evangeline was leading him to; he did not ask himself what would happen when he had to leave the hospital. Darkness reigned over the face of the earth where she was not. He did not reason. Desire does not reason; it drives and forces—some men to destruction, some men by a happier fate to salvation. The man who reasons is the man in whom the forces of Nature have none of the qualities which Evangeline sought in her Sir Launcelot.

CHAPTER VII

EVANGELINE had not reasoned with herself either. Sufficient for the day was the flirting thereof. Youth had come back to her; her personal interest in life, which had been what Hebe called flirting and which she imagined had been killed by the war, had had a sudden rebirth. Saturday came grudgingly, as pleasures do to youth that is born of impatience. Yet Evangeline had not been driven by the same force as Hugh. Her feelings were still far too undetermined for that.

For two glorious hours Hugh had sung to her, and then they had talked with that enjoyment of being together which is one of the most subtle things on earth. Very often there were pauses when they found nothing to say to one another. These pauses were the most significant and delightful thing in the whole affair. During these silences Hugh would think what a fool he was, and how he must be boring Evangeline. Evangeline was not so modest. She knew that everything about her pleased Hugh; she knew also the power of silence, its psychological effect.

Seated at the piano in her khaki uniform, she looked so like a youth of eighteen that Hugh could not reconcile himself to the fact that he had actually seen her looking as soft as a summer cloud in her evening-dress at the concert.

"What are you smiling at?" Evangeline said. "At my big feet?" His eyes had been studying her feet on the pedals.

"At the contrast your feet present in these long top-boots of heavy brown leather and your pale blue slippers of the other night."

"I felt so ridiculous in mufti," she said. "I was quite shy. These things are really far more sensible, and they won't go out of fashion. But how could you see my feet?"

"Because I looked for them," he said. "I always do look at a woman's feet and hands. To me they are as psychological as any other feature about her."

"Mine look pretty awful in these huge things, anyhow."

"They are awfully nice," he said. "But I thought that blue frock you wore was lovely. You see, we get so much khaki; it is a great treat to see a girl dressed as you were dressed the other night. I expect you know that; it was awfully nice of you to think of it—to dress as girls used to be dressed."

"But I wasn't," Evangeline said. "That blue frock is a 'dug-out.' I have no use for gay rags, so I never buy any. I did my best, but it was pre-war." Evangeline knew better than he did why she had done her best.

"Shows all I know," he said. "I thought it was perfect, the most enchanting sort of gown. I couldn't tell you now what it was, or anything about it; I only know that its colour was awfully unreal, and you looked more feminine than anything I have ever seen in my life, and I believe that that is what appeals most to us trench-dwellers. I wasn't the only one who thought so; other people said the same thing."

The way he said "other people" amused and pleased Evangeline. It was so evident that he felt that he himself would naturally take a prejudiced view of her appearance. A delicious excitement filled her.

"Now for a last song!" she said laughingly. "I think the 'other people's' eyes must be very war-weary if they said and thought all that about my poor antiquated evening dress."

They looked for and found another song, and yet another. Evangeline knew that it was wise, it kept things from getting out of hand. Singing was safer than talking. It had got to that point in their intimacy.

"Do you remembers?" were to be particularly avoided. It did not occur to either of them that one summer's afternoon spent in sight-seeing four years ago had served them in good stead for "Do you remembers?" for some weeks.

"Do you remember," she said, choosing what she thought a very safe one, "the pretty American who drove our party over to St. David's in her car?"

"Yes," he said. "She lent us the blue-edged saucer for the wreath. It is now in my mother's possession."

Their eyes met and laughed.

"Yes," she said. "How well you remember!"

"Why not?" he said. "Such days were not common in my life at St. David's."

"I suppose not," she said. "You thought me a very primitive girl from Acadie, I suppose?"

"I must still keep to myself what I thought," he said.

Evangeline turned over the leaves of a song. His words had lidded her eyes.

"I kept what I thought about you all the time I was in Flanders and I never mean to part with it. The thought hasn't changed."

Evangeline strummed the first bars of the song. Still her eyes were screened from view. The big room was empty, save for a few invalids reclining on couches or playing cards at the far end of it. On the turf outside wild rabbits were eating forbidden fruits.

Even a golden silence can become embarrassing and overcharged. Evangeline glanced at her companion. She had a way of looking at people without raising her long lashes.

"I had a letter from Hebe McArthur this morning. It's the first I've received since America has come into the war. She is so happy; she feels that her efforts have not been in vain. But oh, if only it had been sooner!"

"What was she doing?"

"Why, stirring up the American women. She's a brick! Ever since the beginning of the war she has been doing propaganda work in America. And my word, it was needed!"

"How splendid! I remember her quite well—a luxurious creature from the Southern States, rather Spanish."

"Yes, and as ease-loving as a cat—never did a day's work in her life! Now she is at it from morning until night."

Evangeline sighed. "How the war has changed everyone! All of that-car-full who invaded St. David's have become quite different creatures."

Her remark opened up a whole new channel of thought. He knew that she meant that he had changed more than anyone else, that the war had affected and must affect his future life.

"What are you going to do after the war—after you leave here?"

"When I get my wooden foot?" he said laughingly.

"Yes, if you like to put it that way."

"I haven't quite settled," he said.

Evangeline picked out the tune of one of the waltzes which were advertised on the back of the piece of music before her. Her blue eyes scanned his face openly.

"You won't be a curate again, anyhow?"

"I don't know."

"Oh!" Evangeline cried, and her voice was so expressive that it needed no words to tell him what she thought.

"Why not?" he said.

"But you are free, things are different!"

For the next few moments everything of Evangeline spoke but her voice; her whole being expressed curiosity, surprise, annoyance.

"I hope I shouldn't be the same sort of curate," he said.

"But why on earth be one at all?" she said.

He looked at her with laughing eyes. Her words were so reminiscent of the girl who had placed the forget-me-not wreath on St. David's tomb, of the way in which she had said, "And so you are a curate?"

"I might be one," he said, "because I think the Church at this critical time needs men who understand some of the things which being a Tommy has taught me. I have learnt what I failed to see before, the growing need of a true religious revival in England."

"But can the Church of England ever give that revival?"

"I believe it can, if we can get the right force and enthusiasm into the Church. I was the wrong force! I was what is doing the Church so much harm. To me it was a profession; I was a machine. I felt as you do about it."

"And now?" Something was tearing at Evangeline's heart; something heavy was descending on her high spirits. This artist, with a voice like an angel, was a curate at heart after all!

"And now," he said, "I feel that the highest and finest life I could lead would be one like the late Father Stanton, the life of a City priest, working for the boys and youths of London."

"Oh!" Evangeline said. "And you so loved the wild country and freedom—you know you did!"

"Perhaps that's why I want to work amongst the East End poor, because they are the victims of their environment."

"I see. Come and sing to me." Evangeline struck a chord on the piano with both hands. "That is enough for one day," it seemed to say. "Let us forget. . . ."

"Sing to me again," she said sadly. "Sing 'Come out and greet the morn'—you sing it best of all, I think."

"You are saying to yourself, 'He is converted. He is talking cheap cant.' "

"I don't understand. I don't pretend to."

Their eyes both scanned the distant landscape.

"I was afraid you wouldn't," he said.

"Is that why you didn't tell me, why you never mentioned your plans?"

"I suppose so."

"I don't despise you *now*. Don't look at me as though I did."

"You did before?"

"Not often. I felt convinced that you were, as so many other men are, in the Church because of circumstances which were too strong to overcome. But these circumstances are removed; you told me so." Her eyes challenged his.

"I know," he said, "but I am changed. I want to be now what I hated being before."

"Oh, sing," she cried, "and let us forget it. I can't argue."

He sang the song through to the end, in a gay, reckless way. The music suited his voice and the words appealed to his sympathy with Nature. The pagan element in his temperament found an outlet in the abandonment to the worship of the morning.

When he had finished, Evangeline lifted her hands from the piano impulsively and turned her face to his eagerly.

"And *you* want to be a curate?"

"The war does funny things, doesn't it?" he said. "It works in a mysterious way."

"Heavens!" she cried. "When will it stop? What end is there to it? Where can one get away from it and its influence?"

She rose from the piano. Boy-like and straight, she stood before him, rebelling at all which in her subconscious self she admired and encouraged. Hugh felt that he had thrust himself back again into a class and sect of beings who to her were impossible.

"If I had a voice *like* yours," she said, "I should feel that it was my mission, that it had been given to me for the pleasure of mankind. I should feel that singing to people, to make them forget all that it was agony to remember, was 'my bit' in this world. If you went on preaching for a year without stopping, you couldn't teach the people a hundredth part of what you do when you are singing. Oh, do be sensible, for heaven's sake! Go and sing 'Comfort ye my people' just as you sang it to me this afternoon to everyone who is war-weary and heavy-laden! Don't go and put on a black coat and talk 'pi' and urge men who understand nothing about it to go to Communion, as if going to Communion was going to save the blackest sinner's soul. I used to hear that talk about Communion, Communion, everlastingly in the wards—the English Church always does it. The poor suffering men want something nearer and closer to God than that."

There was a sudden stillness, an unhappy one.

"Now I've shocked you!" she said. "You've done with me."

"No, you haven't. I know what you mean. We have too much of it. I have seen it with my own eyes. It is so often form, form, form, church, church, church. They are in the Church and of the Church, but it would be so well to remember that churches were built for God."

"And you want to go back into it? You want to worship God through the Church? You want to rake men into the Church?"

"Yes. With all its faults, it is the greatest and highest civilizing force we know. I have learnt that."

"Have you? Militarism has taught you to admire the Church militant?"

"Have you ever," he said, "been in a bad air-raid in East London? Have you ever seen the Church at work amongst the victims? Have you seen how this war is throwing men back upon something higher than themselves? The Church isn't perfect or ideal, but it can give them that something which they are seeking for if it seizes its opportunity. There is a renaissance of spiritual life to-day."

"But it will grow without the Church. It is outside the Church. The Church cripples it—by forms and orthodoxy and mediæval demands on man's intelligence."

"The war can even make you appreciate rule and ritual," he said, "even what seems like empty form. Nothing appealed to me so much as mass in the trenches. And I have a photograph which I once took of a Chinese joss-house, or whatever they like to call it, which a labour-battalion of Chinese erected on a devastated piece of war-tortured land. Three Chinamen in khaki are kneeling reverently in front of the funny little white building, with its upturned corners—a strange little bit of China in Flanders. Their look of aloof devotion is another proof to me of the necessity for giving the masses a religion with a concrete form."

"But there you are—those men were worshipping *their* god with just the same satisfaction."

"Whatsoever a man truly worships, it is the same God." His face looked troubled. "But please don't," he said. "I have fought the fight; I have argued it all out so often. It is only the forms of religions which differ. Those Chinamen were worshipping the same Power that we worship. They were doing it in the way they understand, the way they were taught. The English Church offers the form which Englishmen understand and are accustomed to. The unintellectual world is not ready for a religion which has no outward form."

"Good-bye." Evangeline held out her hand.

"Good-bye," he said. "I know the things you are thinking; you think I am going to slip back again into a cramped, narrow life, that the war has made me a dull, goody-goody sort of young man—worse, if anything, than the rotter of a curate you met four years ago."

"Oh, no, I don't!" Her hand fell from his. "I really don't. I only thought I knew you, and I don't."

She turned abruptly away, like a child who had lost her playmate, a playmate who had come to her in her weary life of toil.

"I think I know you," he said. "I knew that I was risking a great deal in telling you this, and yet I feel certain that you will come to agree with me in the end, if you saw more of the life in which I want to mix myself up. Besides, you certainly admire honesty."

She swung round on him, a beautiful bewilderment-driven girl. "I do," she said. "Forgive me if I have been rude and

unsympathetic. The war has left me a little bit behind, I suppose. Oh!" she cried suddenly, as she stretched out her arms in abandonment, "do you never pray and yearn for it to be all over, just to satisfy only your personal longings and wants? Does self never obliterate all else with you? Do you never hunger for the days of peace and plenty, just from purely personal tiredness of ugliness and of doing without, of weariness and sadness? I get fits like that, when I don't care about anything except being an individual again. I want to see ease and plenty and riches flowing over the land as they used, I want the old arrogant expression of luxury, of abandonment to pleasure! I want to feel as you felt when you forgot the war and sang 'Come out and greet the morn!' It's for myself that I want it all. I can't help it! It comes over me, and I want to wallow in ease and beauty and idleness and useless extravagance!" She paused. "That's the real me very often, far oftener than you think. And then comes the reaction, and I want to wound myself, to feel what you have felt, and all the others. I want to lie out in the open and go without food and water for forty-eight hours, as our men have done! What can you make of such a fool, such an unreliable fool? I drove a man into fighting, goaded him into the tragedy which has made him a hideous creature for life! I, who often feel as if I only wanted the war to stop so that I myself could enjoy luxury and pleasure again. What can you make of such a fool?"

"Oh, Evangeline!" Hugh's eyes embraced her.

"Don't!" she cried. "I'm all wrong! The soul of the war hasn't touched me, it has passed me by. I scorn others if they don't give their life for the cause, and remain utterly selfish myself."

"Who is the man who has become disfigured?" Hugh felt that he must know. The words had poured from the girl's suffering heart. She had made a confession in this moment of emotional fervour. As she had told him so much, she must tell him more.

"My mother's step-son."

"What was he before the war?"

"A rising specialist. He didn't join up."

"But he went into the Army Medical?"

"No, I wanted him to fight, to do the real thing."

"Because . . .?" He urged her to finish her sentence.

"Because," Evangeline said, "I thought I loved him. I had loved him, and the man I would marry must have fought for England."

Hugh asked no more questions. A man is less articulate than a woman in his moments of emotion.

"A fine sort of person," she said bitterly, "to send a man into the trenches! A person who can feel as I often feel, just a monument of unsatisfied, selfish desires!"

"What is he doing now . . . your friend?"

"Recovering. He must end his days dragging them out in his father's house, helping him in his country practice, where people have known him all his life; they will be kind enough to reconcile themselves to his disfigurement. He will be fit for nothing else."

"Have you seen him since he was disfigured?"

"I am going to see him soon, a little later on. Good-bye," she said. "My time is up."

"Good-bye," he said abstractedly. His mind was so full of the food she had given it to feed upon that he spoke mechanically. Her absence would be a relief. He wanted her to go quickly. He must be alone.

CHAPTER VIII

One month later Alex received the following telegram from Evangeline: "Will be with you at 6.30." She was now waiting for her with curiosity and impatience. It was only five minutes to the half-hour. In another two minutes she heard the toot-toot of a taxi-cab stopping at her front door. Three minutes later Evangeline was in the room beside her.

"Are you wondering why I have come?"

"I never wonder at anything now."

"The war brings strange visitors."

"It gives and it takes away." Evangeline looked at her searchingly. She wondered if she knew. "It certainly takes away. Almost every one of my boarders has lost someone near or dear to them."

"Alex," Evangeline laid her hand on her friend's arm, "have you any idea why I want to see you?"

"Not the faintest. What is it? Tell me."

"Your husband is in a hospital, near Glasgow."

"My husband?"

"Yes, your husband. I always knew he was alive," Evangeline's abruptness was not cruel; it was suggestive of nothing but intense sympathy.

"You always knew? Who told you?"

"Tony, I think, in his babyish way. I knew that day at St. David's. It came to me then, the certainty, but I really knew from the very first."

"What is the matter with him?"

"He has lost his right arm from the shoulder, clean off."

"His right arm!" Alex repeated the words mechanically, while her inner self said, "He can never shoot big game again. What is the use of his life?" So Franklin was right. She had found him; he would come back to her with only one arm, more useless than ever. 'I knew he was in the war," she said. "Franklin told me. I'm not cruel; I'm only stunned."

"Does he know him—Franklin Gibson?"

"He saved Larry's life."

"Oh, Alex! how extraordinary! How is he—Franklin?"

"Pretty much the same—the doctor thinks a little better."

"Is he considered out of danger yet?"

"I suppose so, for all septic trouble is over, but he makes no real headway. He doesn't try; he doesn't want to live."

"And he saved Major Hemingway's life? Your husband doesn't know that, I'm sure he doesn't."

"Franklin means nothing to Larry. I don't suppose he ever heard who the Tommy was who went to find bearers for him and got wounded on the way."

"Did Franklin know whose life he was saving?"

"He volunteered to take the risk because he knew."

There was one of the dramatic silences which such a situation creates. Evangeline could not ask Alex if she was glad or sorry that her husband was alive and safe. Alex was hedged about with her old aloof air of unbreakable reserve.

"How did you come across Larry?" she said absently.

"Very oddly. I have been seeing a good deal of a soldier called Hugh Tennant—oh, you may remember him!" Evangeline flushed as she spoke. "Do you recollect a curate at St. David's who showed us all over the cathedral and the ruins?"

"Yes." Alex's troubled mind was travelling back to days which seemed extraordinarily far away. "Yes, I remember. You flirted with him, Hebe said."

"Well, I amused myself with him," Evangeline said, "while you went to sleep and Franklin held his soul in patience until you waked."

"Yes, a very good-looking boy, if I remember rightly."

"Well, he has lost his right foot—he is a patient in our hospital. He joined up as a Tommy; he refused a commission. He met your husband in France, and your husband is now in a hospital near ours.

"One day someone motored him over to see Mr. Tennant. I was in the grounds working when he arrived and was introduced to him. Mr. Tennant and I began talking about our picnic to St. David's and mentioned your name—it's extraordinary, the way he remembers all our names and everything about that picnic."

"Is it?" Alex said. Her eyes smiled.

Her question made Evangeline blush; her whole explanation had been flurried and breathless. She went on in the same strain.

"When I mentioned Tony, he looked surprised and interested, but he never said anything at the time. Afterwards I believe he asked Mr. Tennant if he knew where you came from and why you were at St. David's. When Mr. Tennant said that you were visiting at Tregaron Manor, he became quite silent and scarcely spoke to him again—something was obviously usurping his thoughts."

Alex did not speak; she merely waited for Evangeline to go on with her story.

"A few days later I met Major Hemingway when I went over to his hospital to see a friend, a girl who is a V.A.D. there. He began speaking about you again; he asked me if I could tell him whether you had been in Canada. It never entered my head for one moment what he was going to tell me. I told him all I knew for certain about you, and that you had been in Canada. Then I said laughingly to him, 'If you are thinking of claiming connection with her, I should, if I were you, for they are both charming—mother and son.' "

Alex shook her head. "You dear, foolish thing."

"I had told him some stories about Tony. He looked awfully grave, I remember now. I believe he was nearly crying. When I said that both of you were charming, what do you think he calmly said?"—

Alex said, "I don't know."

" 'No-one knows that better than I do.' I looked at him. 'You?' I said. 'Yes,' he said. 'Tony is my son. That charming woman is my wife.' "

"Did he say that?"

"Yes, he did." Evangeline bent forward. "And, oh, Alex, he is still in love with you, you are still his ideal. Whatever happened, that's absolutely true."

"Larry has no ideals. You don't know him."

"Certainly, I never do know men," Evangeline said, "and I never shall."

"What's the matter now?" Alex looked at her. "Why so humble?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm in need of a rest. I'm going on to Glastonbury from here. I just had to come and tell you what I thought you ought to know—that Major Hemingway is alive and that he has fought splendidly."

"Why are you going to Glastonbury?" Alex ignored the reference to Larry.

"For a rest and to see mother. It's ages since I was there."

"Is that all? Is there no other reason?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you are holding something back, you are going for some reason apart from what you have given."

"I'm going to marry Allan if he wants to marry me. I'm going to see if he does?"

"Marry Allan Fairclough? My dear girl, you can't! Have you seen him?"

"No, not yet."

"But, Evangeline, you can't do it! You musn't!"

"Yes, I can. It's my fault that he is what he is. To marry him is my bit. I can make myself do it."

"But why not wait? This is a mad, hasty action, one of your sudden swoops, you wild falcon. You must be stopped. Believe me, you can't do it."

"Alex, I believe I'm nearly in love with that curate who was at St. David's. This will help him as well as Allan."

"Oh, my dear, why are you going to do this mad thing? Allan is hideously disfigured. I saw your mother when she was up in town; she told me so. You, of all people—you Hedonist, as poor Franklin used to call you!"

"I don't know what I am, and I don't care," Evangeline said. "I used to love Allan, or I thought I did. Love's a poor thing if it can't stand facial disfigurements and bodily injuries. I myself was the cause of his ruined life."

"But you weren't. You exaggerate the whole thing."

"Yes, I was. If I'd left things alone, he would have had to go into the Army Medical; I goaded him into actually fighting. He never would have done that if it hadn't been to please me. He said it was to please me."

"You won't really make him any happier by marrying him. You can't do it. You will just ruin two lives completely. You

are too ignorant of what marriage means—the physical side of it. You couldn't tolerate it."

"Allan is incurably vain. I can make him believe that I still love him. He was only too well aware of how romantically I loved him long ago, when he put his career before all else. He may be worth a far better love as he is. I must offer it to him."

"The war does work wonders," Alex said. "He may be far worthier of your love than he was. But the physical side of love is so unchanging." Had the war changed Larry? she wondered. Had it really changed Allan? Or were both she and Evangeline going to be saddled for life with men whom they no longer loved or respected, because they had given themselves to their country? Evangeline read her thoughts.

"Oh, the war!" she said. "There is no end or beginning to what it does. Tell me, Alex—was I right to tell you about your husband? He never asked me to."

"Yes, quite right, of course. I knew it had to come. Franklin told me he was in hospital somewhere; it was merely a matter of time."

"What shall you do? I know nothing about your story, except what he says that he is totally unworthy of you, that you did wisely to leave him."

"I shall go and see him—take him back when he is well enough."

"Oh, he doesn't expect that. He says that he will never bother you."

"Franklin made me promise that I would, so I will."

"Franklin?"

"Yes."

"How like him! And you are really going to do it?"

"Yes, I have made up my mind to."

"But why? He will get a pension; he can live on it. He's quaintly frank about his worthlessness as a husband. He really would let you alone, I feel he would. We have had some long talks together."

"He is Tony's father; he has fought for England, while Tony and I have been safe at home."

"Oh, but, Alex!" Evangeline gave a little gasp. "There is Franklin . . . you care . . . I know you do. And he has fought for England too!"

"Yes, I do care, but not in the way you think—not in the way that will break my heart. It was broken long ago. I care for all the rest and peace and comfort his presence gives me; I care for the niceness of being loved; I care for all that belongs to his love for me. It's his love for me that I love. I can never love again. Everything of that sort that was worth having, apart from what is purely gratitude, I gave to Larry. If Larry had died in the war I should have married Franklin. I want to marry him. I can imagine nothing nicer on this earth now than being his wife. That is the woman I have become. But I can live without him. It is not the love which drives and kills."

"Is he going to live without you?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Isn't life rotten?" Evangeline said. "This war has given you back Larry and taken Franklin." She sighed. "It has killed my old love for Allan, while it forces me to marry him."

"Your case is different, Evangeline. It is a quixotic thing to do."

"Not any more than Franklin's sacrifice."

"Why don't you marry the curate? He is in love with you. He gave himself to the war."

"The war has changed him too."

"How? In what way?"

"He hated being a curate before; now he wants to be one. He refused a commission because he thought he could do better work amongst men as a Tommy."

Alex laughed. "You absurd girl!"

"You needn't laugh. He wants to be the kind of curate that doesn't marry—it's all or nothing with him."

"Has he told you so?"

"He say's he's going to be the sort of curate Father Stanton was; he will lead a life devoted to the boys in the City. I know that meant that he will never marry."

Alex laughed again. "Perhaps it did, but wait and see. Love is a wonderful force."

"But I shouldn't like to change his convictions. Besides, I couldn't marry a curate."

"You speak as if they were some abnormal species of humanity."

"So they are!" Evangeline said. "All curates and vicars and bishops are. I've always pitied every woman I knew who married any one of them."

"You wild thing! Hasn't the war clipped your wings short enough yet?"

"I'm going to Glastonbury."

"Is that where they are to be clipped?"

"Oh, please," Evangeline said, rising to her feet as she spoke, "forget I've spoken like this. If you hear from me that I am going to marry Allan, it is because I love him. It is the end of a very long and beautiful romance. He was my Sir Launcelot."

"You have gone back to the past tense."

"I want to send off some telegrams—will the office be closed? We have oceans to talk about, but I must get them off at once."

"You have time still. I'm sorry I can't offer to send someone out with them."

"How are you?" Evangeline said. "How's your staff? Have they all gone to munitions?"

"Wonderful! My boarders are such bricks—do their own rooms, help in every way they can."

Evangeline disappeared. She was to see Alex again at dinner-time. A good deal more had been said between them in a broken sort of way, which showed how closely Evangeline had kept in touch with Alex during the last four years. They had become intimate and devoted friends. Intimate in spite of the fact that Alex had never told Evangeline that her husband was alive. That was the one fact about her life which Alex thought she did not know. Nor did Evangeline know it for certain, but she had so strong a conviction that it was so that she accepted the fact as conclusive. She imagined that Larry had left Alex for some other woman. The subject was a sealed book.

When Alex was left alone, she sat down to think things out. How lovely the wild Evangeline still was! Must she let her ruin her life? Could she do nothing to prevent her carrying out this quixotic deed, which would lead to the cruellest form of unhappiness both for herself and for Allan. But what could

she do? What argument could she use to persuade her that she was doing wrong instead of right?

Evangeline did not usurp her entire thoughts. There was Larry to consider. What step should she take first in the matter? Should she write to him, or should she go and see him? How was she to explain to Tony that his father was alive and coming back to them? How was Larry to take up his life in her boarding-house? She smiled, and genuine humour twinkled in her eyes. What astonishment it would cause her unsuspecting boarders!

These private troubles of Alex's were very often rudely broken in upon by some demand on her attention for purely mundane affairs. They were interrupted at this moment by one of the housemaids who said that she had come with a message from the cook.

"What is it?" Alex asked.

"She has had a wire from her young man, who has arrived in Liverpool, on leave, and she wants to go to Liverpool by the nine forty-five train from Euston."

Alex had engaged the woman with the understanding that if her young man got the leave which he was expecting in a few weeks' time, she should be allowed to go to his people in Liverpool and spend the days of his leave there with him. Nothing was to stand in the way, or she would not take the place.

"Well, Mary," Alex said, "we must do the best we can. It was a promise—I must keep it."

"Yes, ma'am. And just as dinner has to be cooked too!"

"It is the war," Alex said. "You would want to go to your young man, wouldn't you, Mary?"

"I think cook's going to get married, ma'am. She's been getting such a lot of new things—boots and stays and all."

"Oh, but she'll come back?" There was anxiety in Alex's voice.

"Oh, yes, she'll come back when he's gone."

"Then tell her I'll come and cook the dinner," Alex said. "To-morrow I'll try to get a temporary cook. This won't be the first time, Mary."

"You are a wonder, ma'am."

"Well, tell Rachel she can go at once."

"She's gone, ma'am, long ago."

"Oh," Alex said, "she has gone, has she? Well, it was a bargain. It is the war, and all's fair in love and war. I'm coming, Mary. I'll be in the kitchen in five minutes."

Before she went into the kitchen, Alex lifted up the silver picture-frame which held Tony's portrait. She pressed the smiling face to her cheeks.

"My precious," she said, "the war can't take you, whoever else it takes! It can't touch you." As she laid the frame down on the table, she said, "How am I to tell him? What questions he will ask!" A smile hovered round her lips. "Bless his little heart! He will be so pleased to have a wounded soldier for his father that nothing I tell him will matter much. Larry will be a hero in his son's eyes, at any rate!"

CHAPTER IX

EVANGELINE had spent three days in Glastonbury. She had seen Allan, but not without his mask. On the afternoon of the third day, a late spring day, she was seated on the green turf of Wearyall Hill, not far from the spot where Allan first met her, where a stone marks the place where Cromwell's soldiers hacked down the winter-flowering thorn. Centuries rather than years seemed to have passed since Allan had told her the legend of the *crataegus precox*. Her world had been reborn since she had listened to Allan's scientific explanation of its miraculous blooming.

Evangeline's flying feet had carried her as far from the town as time would allow. She was going to attend a lecture on Serbia, at which her stepfather had promised to speak and introduce the lady-doctor who was to deliver the lecture. For a little time she must be quite alone, must get away from everyone and everything. She wanted Nature only, its clear skies and its clouds; she wanted detachment from material things. She wanted Nature to hold her and in her close embrace save her from all human things, from the desire of hopeless eyes, of sealed lips.

She offered herself to Nature; she threw herself on its everlasting mercy. Nature was to be her strong arm, the outstretched hand.

Evangeline had no prayer for what she needed. She could only immerse herself in desire and cry for help and strength, a strength which could only come from self-extinction.

Something outside herself and beyond any definite consciousness of herself did absorb her and soothe her. Nature, to whom her blind cry had been uttered, held her closer than a lover and administered to her what her seeking heart and inarticulate soul implored. We can hand over our material body to sensations wrought by our spiritual over-man. For a few minutes Evangeline lay in strong arms and felt the

glorious rest of material extinction. Some force stronger than herself had taken her to itself, taken her as though she was a little child who had lost its way and was found.

It had not come easily to her, this extinction of self, this evening-calm. She had sat on Wearyall Hill for half-an-hour, battling with the powers that were against it. During that time she had passed through a succession of resolutions and doubts. Then she had discovered quite suddenly, and with amazing certainty, that she could not carry out the deed which she proposed to do or live the life which would be hers without the help of some power outside herself. As herself, nothing more than her material self, she was not strong enough; strengthened and supported by some greater power than she had ever felt the urgent need of before, she could and would do it. Her own weakness during the last two days had proved to her with convincing clearness that she had got to find that influence, that power.

Hugh had found it; it had become an integral part of him. Had her eyes been opened to her need of it in this spot so sacred to Christianity?

She had realized this very dimly and subconsciously while her eyes rested on the quiet town nestling under the square tower of St. John's Church. The answer to her demand for dominance of spirit over matter was so generous that for the time being Evangeline was lifted high above the consciousness of all that had been troubling her. Like a boat at anchor upon a quiet sea, she was lapped by an ether of spiritual sensuousness.

So high and above all things was Evangeline, so aloof from Wearyall Hill and from the town which lay at her feet, in whose remote streets now limped the blue figures of convalescent soldiers—tokens to the peaceful inhabitants, of the world's dispeace, of the distant massacre of youth and manhood—that she almost cried out when the doctor's voice said cheerfully:

"Hallo! You here?"

"No," Evangeline said, with a dazed look. "I mean, yes—I wasn't here a minute ago—you brought me back."

Allan was with the doctor. He was wearing the flesh-coloured half-mask which his father had ingeniously designed and made for him. It hid his disfigurement completely.

"Where were you?" Allan asked. "Were you watching a mediæval tourney?"

"Oh, no. I've quite done with the Middle Ages—they're scrapped." She spoke with exquisite gentleness. "This war has made all that sort of thing, which once seemed so brave and gallant, mere child's play, absolute nonsense." She laughed. "The real greatness and bravery of heroes will have to be re-written."

"You're quite right," the doctor said. "I can scarcely read with any patience, or value the opinions of any person who gave expression to his thoughts before the war. Men I used to think a lot of . . . their ideas don't seem to me to matter now. They didn't know. Only men of this day know."

"I feel that, except with people far away back," Evangeline said. "The moderns have retreated; the ancients have come forward—Greek writers—you know what I mean?"

"That's true—the classics still bear reading. They never die. And the Biblical prophets—they are strangely up-to-date."

"They have had a tremendous re-birth—don't you think so?" She spoke to Allan. "I mean the classics—if the wars described in them weren't anything compared to this war, those old writers said things about them which are worthy of the greatness and calamity of this war."

"I don't know. I have read so little lately."

"Of course, I know." Evangeline felt foolish; she should have remembered. "Do sit down," she said. "It's so lovely here."

"I don't think I have time to stop," the doctor said. "I just wanted to have a turn with Allan. I must think over what I am going to say to-night."

"Leave Allan here," Evangeline said. "I'll take care of him and bring him safe home."

"I'm as fit as a fiddle. I don't need taking care of."

"That plan will no doubt suit you all right, Allan," his father said. "It's delightful up here this afternoon."

Allan said that he would be only too pleased to stay, but if Evangeline had come out for a walk alone, she probably wanted to be alone. Evangeline gathered that Allan thought that she might have asked him if he cared to go with her.

Nowadays he persistently saw things from an unhappy point of view.

"No, I don't want to be alone," she said, with clever cheerfulness. Nor did she. Her mind was made up; she was in a mood born of her new awakenedness.

After a few more words the doctor left them. When they were alone, Evangeline changed her seat. A curious exaltation filled her. Had she suddenly become possessed of a new and higher self, a self which had been waiting for expression?

Allan almost rose to his feet. He knew why she had changed her place. Misery deluged his senses.

"Now don't, Allan. Sit down." She laid a caressing hand on his knee. "I only find it easier to talk to you when I can see the expression of your face, when I can read your answer in your eye."

"Why don't you say what is true?" he said. "Say that you can't bear looking at the other side?"

"Because it isn't true; your mask isn't ugly; it isn't unbearable. Won't you try to forget it?"

"But you know what it covers. That is always in your thoughts. You just tolerate me out of pity."

"Oh, Allan!" Evangeline's words were a cry.

"It's true."

"It isn't! You know it isn't! I'm awfully fond of you."

"Not in the old way. You couldn't be fond of a man with half a face and only one hand." He laughed hideously.

"The half that's left is all right, and if I'm not fond of you in the old way, it's because I'm not the old Evangeline. How could I be the same? You wouldn't want me to be the same romantic girl from Acadie, whose head was full of unreal men and things that don't matter. I'm quite English now, even in my voice."

"To me she wasn't silly. I wouldn't have her changed."

Evangeline laughed. "But you didn't want her, and I don't blame you."

"I did want her, but I sold my happiness for a mess of pottage." He lapsed into silence.

"We were flirting and silly, Allan. You were far too young to think of marriage. . . . To me you seemed awfully wise and ever so much older than myself."

"I have always done the wrong thing," he said gloomily. "If I had joined up sooner, I mightn't have had this."

"You would probably have been killed. There are only a few of the 1914 men left, poor darlings."

"I'd have been a jolly sight better dead!" he said. "Why on earth did they make me live? How could they think I'd like to live?"

"Oh, Allan, don't say that!"

"You think it! Everyone thinks it."

"They don't. Your mask completely hides everything. One gets used to it quite soon."

"But there's my hand," he said. "It's not only my face."

"Oh, I know. Don't think I don't realize that your hand was your profession."

"Oh, damn my profession!" he said. "It's spoilt my life! If it hadn't been for my profession, you would have been my wife by now."

"You are a conceited thing, Allan!" She laughed softly.

"That's true, isn't it? Between us there need be nothing but the truth. You can feel as if you were speaking to a dead man."

"You were quite right, Allan. I was too ignorant to realize how right you were; it was all my vanity. I wanted your complete surrender; I wanted you to fling caution to the winds."

"And I didn't know enough of women to realize that a girl like you wouldn't have let me do it."

Evangeline nodded. "I wanted to be the one to say we must wait, I wanted to save you from folly."

"Would you have waited, Evangeline?"

There was a pause. The beautiful clearness of the spring evening surrounded them; the calm of ancient sanctuaries lay at their feet; the bleating of young lambs came from the island pastures.

"It would help me now to know that you would have waited . . . the battered man would like to know that the whole man might have won you. Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things—at least Tennyson says so." As he waited for her answer, his uncovered face was as dull and immovable as stone; his voice was chill and hopeless. He looked like a figure of a man, to whom her answer could not matter.

A voice so unlike Evangeline's as to be a surprise to herself broke the nervous stillness. "I have waited, Allan. I am waiting now."

A groan, or rather an expression of anguish broke from his compressed lips. "Don't! That is pity. Spare me pity! Where there once was love, spare me anything else!"

"If I have both for you, Allan, won't you accept them? Will you refuse it a second time, the love you can accept or reject?"

The very stillness seemed to wait for his answer. The lambs had ceased their bleating; a hawk, suspended in the blue, hung on his words. Evangeline, lost to all other senses but the fulfilling of her high purpose, was animated by a quality of excitement and elation which deceived Allan, and stayed her powers of reason and balance. She had come to Glastonbury to do this act, which to her seemed her unmistakable duty. It was her sacrifice on the altar of war. She was going to do it willingly and ungrudgingly. Her spirit was strong, if indeed her flesh was weak. She had just been fortified with a new and glorious inrush of spiritual supremacy.

"How can you feel love for such a man as I am?" Allan said, slowly and bitterly. "It's impossible—a half-handed, half-faced grotesque of a human man!"

"But if the half of the man I love is better than the whole of anyone else, Allan?"

Allan groaned. Was it fair to tempt him? "I believe you could make yourself marry me," he said. "But if I have only half my face and only one hand, I have still my wits. I'm not a fool."

"I know you're not, Allan."

"Well, my senses tell me that you can't want to marry a man like me."

"They tell you wrong."

He turned round and faced her. He had been mindful up to now to keep his perfect profile clearly visible, to hide the masked side of his face.

"Is that true?" He spoke madly, wildly. "Don't lie to me. As your lover, I feel the same man that I ever was. As your husband I shall want the love you would have given to me when I was undamaged. Do you understand? Can you give it?"

"The war has changed us all, Allan. You won't find any woman or man the same."

"That is letting me down gently! Good God!" he said. "I was a fool to imagine you could! It would have been kinder to have left me alone." He drew himself away from her.

"Then you don't want to marry me, Allan? You don't think you would be happier if I were your wife?"

"Not if you shrank from me, not if your love is all pity."

Evangeline took his left hand in hers and held it, even against his attempt to withdraw it.

"You are so bitter," she said, "so determined to exaggerate things, so hard on those who love you."

"You nearly made me forget what I know you really feel for me. You almost wrecked your life a minute ago. I'm still human."

"I told you I loved you. I asked you to marry me. I came to Glastonbury only for that reason."

"Before my accident, you as much as said to me that you despised me. You said the old Evangeline was dead. That meant that the Evangeline who once loved me loved me no longer—I was to jolly well understand that. Added to that, there is now my disfigurement."

"Can one's first instinctive, headlong love ever die, Allan? I was angry because the man I loved hadn't joined up. You did join up. Fate treated you cruelly, abominably!"

"And because of that you are going to sacrifice yourself, to try and make amends!"

"Oh, you are so unfair. When I was a girl I showed my love for you too plainly. Again, as a woman, I offer it to you, and you refuse to believe that it is good enough!"

"If it could be for your happiness as well as my own, Evangeline, you must know how I want you!"

"I shall never be happy if you don't marry me."

Allan put his hand up to his face. If he had had two hands, he would have buried his head in them. A whirlwind of passion for the girl at his side exhausted his defences. Evangeline put her strong young arms round him and leaned against him. Her dark hair brushed his hand as she leant her head against it.

"Take me, Allan," she said. "Let us try to make life sweet and good together."

Allan removed his hand from his face. His one arm went round her. Kiss her he could not; his mask denied him the privilege. A sob such as Evangeline had never heard before, a sob of anguish, passion and despair, made her doubly gracious to him. If there was anything that was hers which would lessen his despair, it must be generously his.

"You offer me heaven," he whispered. " Do you know that?"

"Just my silly self, Allan, that is all."

"From the blackness of hell, and you offer me heaven!"

Evangeline caressed his hand. "We are both far too imperfect to be happy in heaven, Allan. Don't expect too much from me; just take me for better or worse."

"If you knew what it meant!" he said. "Think of my life here in the future without you!"

"I won't think," Evangeline said, "because we are going to be together." She was silent for a moment, and then said gently, "Perhaps I am better off in the way of money than you thought, Allan. By my father's will, if my mother married again, half her income was to come to me. I didn't know that when I made the match—honest injun, I didn't! And so far I've not needed money."

Allan smiled. It was so like Evangeline, the old wilful, dominating Evangeline. But the smile died away and lost itself in remorse. Did she still think he worshipped prosperity?

"I have quite a nice little income for two elderly, staid people. The war has altered everyone's outlook. We have left off crying for the moon; life is made up of 'substitutes.' "

Her humour did not bring back his smile.

"We can live here, and you can help your father. And when the war is over, we can travel. You must come to Grand Pré to see my relations."

"And you will have a fine thing to show them—a penniless husband, with half a face and only one hand! You can't do it."

"Oh, Allan, you will be a war-hero!"

"I wasn't in the war," he said brazenly. "You'll never forget that. Leave me out of your return to Acadie."

"No, I won't," she said. "I'm engaged to you. We are going to share all things and bear all things together." Her enthusiasm was bound to triumph over Allan's determined misery, over his brave refusal of her offer. The feeling of victory excited and elated her. She forgot the real facts of the cause for which she was fighting. She forgot that there is the physical as well as the spiritual side in the urgency of love. She had not Alex's experience of the practical side of matrimony to caution her.

"I adore you!" he said suddenly. "When I left you, long ago, that night at the door of the Chalice Hostel, I didn't know how much I loved you. I only found it out when I was away from you. I worked like a tiger to try to forget you . . . or it may have been to make a big name for you! My profession became a part of you. I thought I should come back and say, 'Now I have something besides myself to offer you; now our love won't fly out at the window, for poverty won't come in at the door!' "

"Oh, Allan! And I only wanted you yourself, your young, headlong, love-driven self!"

"I know," he said. "I was a fool, but I couldn't trust myself." He paused. "Girls are different to men. If I had become engaged to you, I couldn't have worked; I should have had to marry you."

"I know. I understand now. I didn't then."

"Do you?" he said. "You could have waited, you could have been happy with me as a lover. I knew that I couldn't. I knew that my work would have gone to pieces until I was married to you; my whole mind and senses would have been usurped by you."

"Yes. I was too young to understand, Allan."

Ever since, I've only loved you more and more. No other girl has interested me, no other girl can come within miles of you. If only I had trusted to our love!"

"And now I am yours, an ever so much wiser woman."

"And what have I to give you?" he said. "You have beauty, money, youth—everything!"

"But shouldn't I have been myself without all these things, Allan?"

"No," he said, almost gaily; it was his first surrender to her

wooing, "you wouldn't, for 'you' means to me blue eyes and beauty, and all the speed of youth, and feminine refinement. You wouldn't be you without all these things, if you were as loathsome to look at as I am."

"Allan," she said quickly, "I have never seen you with your mask off. I'm never going to. Your father says that you need never take it off, and he says that as time goes on you won't be nearly so much disfigured. I am never going to see you without it, until it is no longer necessary."

"Very well," he said. "God knows I don't want you to!"

"When I have to wear false teeth," she said gaily, "I promise you I'll never let you see me without them."

"Agreed!" he said gently. "You're wonderful, Evangeline, so wonderful that I feel dumb."

"Then we're engaged!" she said. "You have at last accepted my unmaidenly proposal, my absolute entreaty to marry me?"

Allan raised her hands to his face. Alas! the pity of it that his poor lips might not press hers in devout surrender. With his fingers covering the youth and softness of hers, they sat in silence.

A town clock struck. Evangeline started. "I shall be late," she said. "Let's go back. I promised mother that I would be back in good time."

"Leave me here," he said.

"No, Allan, come with me. Come and tell them."

"Please leave me. I want to be alone. I'll come later." He smiled almost boyishly. "Do as I tell you."

"But I promised your father that I'd bring you back."

"I'm all right," he said restively. "I'm perfectly well. I can see and walk all right; I'm not quite helpless. I suppose I'm lucky to have my two legs left!" He looked at her entreatingly. "Do go, dearest," he said. "I must be alone. I've not grown accustomed to proposals yet."

"All right," Evangeline said. "If I meet your father, I'm going to tell him the news. I want to see him smile."

"Wait, Evangeline! Let's think this over."

"No, no," she said. "It's a settled matter. Any drawing back now is a breach of promise. I'm off. Good-bye!" With a kiss wafted from her finger-tips and a gay smile, Evangeline turned her back on her lover and with long, swinging strides

hurried down the hill, the hill where he had found her, looking at the world from upside-down.

She would not allow herself to think; she would not question her own feelings. She had made Allan happier; she had given him the one thing in this world which could make his life endurable. He had shown her its blackness, the depth of his despair and the torture of his mind. Not by what he had said; it was what he had left unsaid which hurt her. In this world of self-sacrifice, her attempt to bring back happiness into Allan's life was a poor little thing to do, nor would she face it as a sacrifice. On that side of the question she did not allow any self-glorification. She was going to be his wife; she would love him and give herself to him in the way of all loving, happy wives.

This phase of mind kept her from arguing with herself. Beyond what she had done, she went not one step further. She kept her mind rivetted on its high eminence. She would not visualize the future. Allan needed her, that was her surety. With the evening air cool on her forehead, and the meadows starred with flowers meeting her gaze, it seemed a good and excellent thing that she had done. It was well that she had settled the matter and given what consolation she could to Allan. He was her old lover; he was the doctor's only son, and Evangeline loved with a youthful ardour her gallant, adoring stepfather.

Allan had said that she was offering him heaven. How splendid it was to feel that of her own doing she could give any suffering man heaven! She walked faster and faster, while the excitement of emotion thrilled her and tuned up her nerves. Soon she would have justified her existence; that was sufficient. The war demanded some good reason for every woman's existence as well as for every man's. Her *raison d'etre* was to be a wife to Allan, to help him to help others.

A little out of breath she arrived at her mother's house. She was five minutes later than she had promised. Her stepfather was flirting with his wife while they waited together for her return. Mary's coat and gloves lay on the sofa. The doctor had still a lover's eagerness in his attentions; Mary had to be helped into her coat, and he had to bend over her wrist while he fastened the buttons of her glove.

"I'm not late, am I?" Evangeline said. "At least, not very?"

"No," the doctor said, "only five minutes, and I hadn't seen Mary for a quarter of an hour all to-day, so we forgive you."

Evangeline went up close to the doctor and put her arms round his neck. "I am late," she said, "because I was proposing to Allan." Her head went down on the big man's chest; her face was crushed close to his breast.

The doctor bent his head to hers and tenderly caressed her dark hair. "My dearest," he said, as he pressed her closely to him, "has my boy accepted you?" The doctor raised his head as he spoke. His eyes sought Mary's. Her child was in his arms; she had offered herself to his son.

Evangeline's blue eyes were raised to meet their gaze. They were tearless, exultant. "I made him, Doc; he just had to accept me!"

Evangeline was trembling. The doctor could feel to what a high pitch her nerves were strung. He understood the girl's temperament far better than either her mother or his son. He understood the nature of the emotion which she felt at that moment—her unconscious exaltation of self-sacrifice, her ecstatic happiness in having made Allan happy, in her conquest of his depression and despair. It was all a fine part and portion of the girl who was to him a dear and beautiful daughter, a wild child of wide lands.

Evangeline was moulded on generous lines. There was nothing small in either her faults or her virtues. The old romantic Evangeline was as alive to-day as the girl who said that every woman longs, or has longed to resist, or rather to succomb to a Sir Launcelot. The war had affected her, but it had not changed her. Men no longer needed to go out and look for dangers as they had in Sir Launcelot's day, to prove that they were worthy of their knighthood. The girl knew well that the world to-day was full of heroes far nobler than the Knights of the Round Table. The Doctor knew that she was a woman whom the war was driving to this act of mercy; he knew that she was doing it to prove herself worthy of the war. As the war demands the best and the finest that is in us all, he was exquisitely aware that the girl in his arms was giving of her best.

"You made him accept you, did you? And was he so very reluctant?"

Evangeline withdrew herself from the Doctor's arms and

went over to her mother before she said, "You knew I loved Allan. All these years he was in my thoughts. Little mamma, say you are glad."

The pity in Mary kept her silent, but she embraced her tall child. Evangeline stooped over her in the old protecting way, while she glanced at the Doctor.

"Must I go to the meeting?" she said.

"Certainly not, if you'd rather stay at home." It was the Doctor who spoke.

"But I want little mamma, Doc, and it's rude and unkind to you."

"Keep her by all means," he said. "I will put in an appearance—that will do."

With one of her swooping movements, Evangeline lifted her mother up in her arms. "Just a bit of the old days, Doc, for half-an-hour." Her smile was all love and gentleness.

The Doctor banished them with a correspondingly tender smile. "Be off, both of you," he said. "I want silence."

When Evangeline, with his protesting wife held close in her arms, had left the room, the Doctor sat down in his low easy-chair. His head sank almost to the level of his knees; his hands covered his eyes.

"Can we allow it?" he said. "Why has she done it? Can the old love have revived? Has it, after all, stood the test?" His heavy frame shook. "No, it isn't that! It can't be the love she once felt. I wish to God I could think so! What will she tell Mary? What will Allan tell me?" He pulled out his watch and looked at it. "I have no words for any platform to-night. It won't be the suffering Serbians that will be in my mind; it will be things nearer home—it will be that girl's eyes and the new expression in them."

He rose from his seat and gathered together the notes which he had made for his speech. When he had folded them in order and put them in his pocket-book, he hurried from the room. The unacknowledged dread that Allan would appear before he got out of the house hastened his actions. If Allan did appear, it would be good-bye to anything like a passable speech from himself that night. An eager audience, he knew, was already in the hall, waiting to hear the lady-doctor speak upon the subject of her work in Serbia.

As he shut the house-door behind him, he looked back. It held the two dearest women on earth to him.

"If it isn't love," he said, "and it can't be, we won't permit it. Only a love that passeth all understanding could make the thing a success for either of them. My poor boy! My poor, ambitious boy! That a woman should marry you for pity!"

He fingered the papers which contained his notes in his pocket, as much as to say, "This is what I have to think about now. The war allows very little time for personal sorrows. His gardener had lost two sons in the war; he had just heard that morning that a third was wounded and missing. What were his troubles compared to such as these?

He passed the man in his best clothes going to the meeting. They exchanged a few words.

"I hope we shall take up a good collection, Andrew," the Doctor said. "It's wonderful what this little place can do!"

"I hope so, sir. I've got my bit of paper ready, anyhow."

The Doctor looked at the toil-worn man. "Well done, Andrew! That's a big sum for you. Can you spare it?"

"We'd have to spare a deal more if the Germans was here, sir. There was nothing left for them poor Serbians to spare, was there, sir?"

"Good-night," the Doctor said. He was a strong man, but something caught in his throat like a vise.

At the meeting the gardener was suddenly startled by hearing his master quote his actual words from the platform. They brought down a thunder of applause and raised the collection by thirty per cent. Andrew had not cast his bread upon the waters in vain.

* * * * * *

It was not until late that night, in the privacy of their own room, that Mary was able to speak to her husband on the subject of Evangeline's engagement. The engaged couple had been with them at their evening meal, which was not eaten that night until the doctor returned from the lecture.

Evangeline was in high spirits. She was so gracious and loving to Allan that in spite of himself he forgot his depression and became infected by her merry badinage. Allan would not have been human if he had withstood her. He had spent a terrible hour alone with himself and with the forces in him, which were

at war with his acceptance of Evangeline's offer. They had worked hard for Allan's higher and nobler self. They had almost won; he had walked down the hill, trodden by the feet of England's first messengers of the new religion of self-sacrifice, with the determination in his heart to renounce the happiness which Evangeline had held out to him, to give her back her freedom. Into his broken, ruined life, she had offered to bring the only thing which could make it humanly endurable. Full of his high ideal, of what his honour as a man demanded of him, of what he knew to be fair to the girl who could not be fair to herself, he was met by an Evangeline lovelier than anything he had ever seen, lovelier and more loving. She had donned her most becoming gown; a little flush of excitement tinged the clear pallor of her cheeks.

When Allan appeared, she sprang towards him. "I have told them our news, Allan—you've only got to receive a fatherly blessing. We have only got one in-law each. You're the one who's got the mother-in-law. I've only got a father-in-law, and he never bites!"

Allan was whirled into the situation. Evangeline carried him along with her enthusiasm. The scene palpitated with her vitality and spirit. He was shy. All his pre-arranged plans fell from him. They had suddenly vanished into thin air. He looked at his future mother-in-law for help. She was always so gentle and tender. During his convalescence she had helped him to keep control of his nerves, and control was necessary if he wished to save himself from melancholia.

"Can you give her to me?" he asked. "Will you allow it? Is it possible?"

Mary laughed her pretty, youthful laugh. "My dear boy! Allow it! Give her to you? Why, she allowed me to marry your father; she gave me to him!"

Allan looked at Evangeline, whose arm was linked through his father's. Her head was resting caressingly on his shoulder. She was a fine height beside him.

As he looked, his power to give her up failed him. A voice urged him to take what the gods offered him. Surely his broken life and cruel fate deserved some compensation? Besides, she looked exultantly happy; he had never seen her more glowing, more vital.

"But do you *approve?*" he said to Mary. "Do you, or do you not, object?" He looked at his right arm; the lower portion of his sleeve was turned back at the stump of his arm and pinned to the upper part. He had not yet received his artificial hand. His eye dwelt on it significantly.

"If you both love each other," she said, "nothing else matters." What more could she say?

"God knows I love her," he said, "but I am not what you have a right to expect for a son-in-law."

"You are my husband's son, Allan. Whom should I love more dearly as a son-in-law?" She smiled bravely. "This room contains our little world. We four, we are complete in ourselves."

"You are so kind," Allan said; his voice broke suddenly. "I never hoped or imagined that there could be such goodness, such wonderful love."

Evangeline left the Doctor's side and went to her lover. "This is our engagement night, Allan. I'm not going to allow any sadness or tears! Now, look happy, and say that you are awfully happy. Anyone would think that I'd made you promise to marry me!"

"And so you did!" he said as he caught her hand in his. "Oh, father, I never dreamed of such a thing! I daren't have asked her."

"Oh, that's right—it was the woman who tempted you, the old, old story. How history repeats itself!" Evangeline's voice was gaily mocking. She was determined to banish tragedy.

"Well, Allan," his father said, "I think you're bound to take her. She seems quite determined to marry you, and I know something of her will by this time!" He laughed. "I was jolly glad, I can tell you, that she had made up her mind to marry her mother to me before I fell in love with her!"

"Well, let's sit down to supper," Evangeline said, "and drink our own healths. I'm so hungry."

At supper Evangeline made a good feint of eating a great deal. She piled her plate with salad, which she contrived to put away almost untouched when she cleared the table for the next course; at supper they always waited upon themselves. On being asked if she would take pudding, she accepted both gooseberry-tart and chocolate-cream. The Doctor's quick eye detected the excite-

ment which was keeping the girl up, while it was also preventing her from eating. Food, she felt, would choke her if she attempted to swallow it.

The subject of their engagement was allowed to drop, and the Serbian lecture was discussed, also the day's war-news. Evangeline's life at the limbless hospital afforded her much food for conversation. She had told her mother about Mrs. Hemingway's husband being in a hospital quite close to hers, but she had not alluded to her own intimacy with the curate whom she had met at St. David's. Her mother had not been with them on that excursion, so his existence was unknown to her.

In the privacy of their room that night, the Doctor said, with a gravity which was not lost on his wife, "Mary, what do you think of the turn events have taken? Can we allow it?"

"I'm afraid we can't prevent it."

"Does Evangeline love him?" The Doctor's voice betrayed his anxiety. "If she does, that is all that matters. If she doesn't . . ." He shook his head.

"I don't know." Mary's words came slowly, regretfully.

"You don't think so? Did she say anything to you when I was out?"

"No, nothing that mattered. The chatterbox Evangeline becomes as silent as an oyster on these occasions."

"I know; she has extraordinary self-control. But she wanted to be with you . . . I thought she would confide in you."

"It is Evangeline's actions which confide, never her words. She kept me on her knee for about half-an-hour, rocking me backwards and forwards as if I was a crying child. Every now and then she kissed me passionately, almost wildly. It was as if I was someone else. I felt that she scarcely knew that I was her mother. Her thoughts seemed in the clouds."

"She said nothing, gave no expression of love for the boy? You got nothing out of her?"

"Not a word, except now and again a murmur of 'Poor Allan, poor ambitious Allan!' I know she's fond of him, David. Just once, when I said to her, 'Are you happy, Eve?' she started, as if I had reminded her that I was there. 'Happy?' she said. 'Until the war is over who can be happy? The world has said good-bye to happiness.' 'I meant about your engagement,' I

said. 'Of course I am. It was I who asked Allan. There is that much of happiness left to us, making others less unhappy.'

"I got no more from her on the subject. Evangeline never tells anything by being questioned. It was no use; I know her moods."

The doctor took his wife by the shoulders and looked into her eyes. "You are no happier about it, Mary, than I am."

Mary let herself weep. Her romance was perfect. Evangeline's seemed so imperfect, so tragic. Never had her girl looked more beautiful or noble than she had done that evening. There was a nobility in Evangeline's beauty which made her something far more than a pretty girl.

Mary wept unrestrainedly as she pictured her child with her wild wings clipped, her life narrowed down to the daily companionship of blighted, maimed Allan. That Allan had wanted courage to resist and withstand her superb generosity drew no rebuke from her lips. She could not blame him. She knew man's weakness and his strength. It would have been almost outside the possibility of a young man's nature to have refused her as she was that night.

The Doctor tried to comfort her. "They are not married yet," he said. "Don't let us court tragedy and unhappiness. Our worst unhappiness is always anticipation."

"But," Mary said, "I feel that it will be infinitely crueller and harder for Allan if my girl gives him up, if hers is not a lasting affection."

"You are quite right," he said. "Once he is on the footing of a lover with her, heaven help him if he has to give her up!"

"That's what I feel," Mary said. "Evangeline is so rash, so impetuous. If it is only pity for Allan that has made her do it, it would have been a thousand times better to have left him alone. It would be unthinkable if she gave him up!" Mary shivered as if a cold hand had touched her heart.

"Even if it is only pity, she'll go through with it—that's what I'm afraid of. Evangeline will never retract, never give in."

"How are we to find out?" Mary said. "She can keep anything to herself; she never needs a confidant."

"Trust in Providence," her husband said. "It's not a bad friend. If it doesn't stop the marriage, then let us hope that

their union was arranged by the Power which directs and governs all things."

"You are such a comfort, David."

David stooped down and kissed her wet eyes. "And so are you," he said contentedly.

"I wish that I felt as certain of Evangeline's happiness as I feel of my own."

"Ridiculous woman!" he said tenderly. "It's time you went to bed."

CHAPTER X

It was a beautiful day, warm enough for the soldiers at Lincluden to be sitting in the grounds in invalid chairs or moving about on crutches. Some of them were practising their lately adjusted artificial limbs.

Evangeline was weeding and turning up the soil of a round flower bed, in the centre of which was a flesh-coloured rhododendron in full bloom. The forget-me-nots which had surrounded it were over; they had ceased flowering, so with the ruthlessness of successful gardening, they were being cast into outer darkness; their old age must give place to youth; their faded beauty was unwanted, depressing, unkind.

A voice startled her and brought a quick flush to her cheeks. She had been in a state of nervous expectancy of the same voice all the morning.

"You have returned from your holiday—you are hard at work again?"

"Yes," Evangeline said, while her heart pounded idiotically at her side, "very hard at work. It is rather nice to find that the flowers which were over three weeks ago in the South are just at their best here. I think there is quite three weeks' difference in the seasons, don't you? I'm glad I haven't missed the best months here. The birds are still singing gloriously." She spoke quickly and unsympathetically; her remarks were merely things to say.

Hugh realized their impersonal character, her anxiety to fence off any return to their former footing of intimacy.

"I hope you feel better for your change." The conventional words were not what Hugh wanted to say; they were the outcome of the defences which she had suddenly built up between them. What they defended he scarcely knew.

"I was awfully fit when I went away. I am very well now, thank you."

She took another small plant out of the flat seedling-box by her side and dug the trowel into the earth.

"What are you planting?" he asked. "The poor forget-me-nots are to be forgotten, are they?"

"These are amaranths." Evangeline did not raise her head. "We can't run to expensive bedding-out plants—these make a fine show and are cheap."

"I am not learned," he said. "What are they called in plain English?"

There was a busy turning of the trowel in the soil before she answered his question. She spoke quickly, as she threw a small bundle of rubbish into a pail by her side. "Amaranths? It's just the homely Love-lies-bleeding in plain English."

"Love-lies-bleeding!" Hugh said slowly, and for the life of him he could not think of another word to say. Love-lies-bleeding was to take the place of the blue forget-me-nots which he loved so well?

There was a lengthy pause, while Evangeline continued her planting.

"Did you enjoy yourself?" he asked bravely.

Evangeline looked at him through dark lashes. Her eyes gave him no encouragement to go on talking. She was busy; he ought to leave her.

"Yes, thanks, so far as enjoyment goes nowadays. I heard a great deal about food and rations and substitutes."

"You were visiting your mother?"

"Yes." Evangeline rose from her knees. The circle of Love-lies-bleeding was completed. She cleared up the mess of soil and broken leaves which was scattered round the bed. It looked prim and very tidy. "You are making progress," she said. "Is this your first walk? You were in your chair when I left."

"Yes. You didn't congratulate me." He looked down at his feet as he spoke. He knew that Evangeline had kept her eyes so carefully fixed on her flower-bed that she had not noticed that the bandages no longer showed on his ankle; the end of his trouser-leg was fastened over the stump and pinned up behind.

"You are looking much stronger."

"I am feeling extraordinarily fit, thanks."

Evangeline was brushing off the soil from her uniform. When it was quite clean their eyes met. Neither of them said a word more; their absurd and almost formal greeting was so unmistakably the result of a forced and necessary constraint on Evan-

geline's part and a consciousness on Hugh's that something had happened during her absence which must affect their friendship and intimacy. They were both unhappy and nervous in their embarrassment.

Hugh dared not break down the barrier by asking Evangeline what had happened. He knew the girl too well to advance further than she wished him to go for the present.

"Now that bed is finished," she said, "I must be off."

"Are you going to plant any more amaranths? May I come with you?—I'm so bored with myself."

"I think that is all we have of them. I must go and ask for my orders."

"I'm glad," he said, "I hope it is all you've got."

She looked at him, and by way of explanation, he merely said gravely, " 'A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot'—you know those lines, of course?"

"Yes," she said, "T. E. Brown's—

> 'Rose plot,
> Fringed pool,
> Ferned grot. . . . ' "

She paused, while he took up the words:

> " 'The veriest school
> Of peace; and yet the fool
> Contends that God is not.' "

Their eyes held, battling, strained and tender.

"That was why I don't want Love-lies-bleeding," he said, as he looked towards the splendid view, the background for the wooded park, which lay before them—Dumbarton Castle rising from its high rock in the Clyde, and the nearer green hills, romantic and calm, with a clear, clean light sanctifying their farther heights.

> " 'Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool!
> Nay, but I have a sign;
> 'Tis very sure God walks in mine.' "

He smiled as he finished the lines. "That's why I don't want it," he said again. "This is a sanctuary—don't let bleeding Love enter into it. Can't you plant forget-me-nots again?"

"They don't go on blooming for ever. We must look ahead—they are almost over."

"We picked them at St. David's in midsummer." His voice was detached; the present had little to do with his thoughts Why look ahead? He felt stunned, lost, at a disadvantage. He had heard that Evangeline had returned; he had walked about the garden hoping to meet her. He had expected a happy greeting, a friendly re-union. Instead of which he met tragic eyes, trying to be disdainful, a stranger.

"Those were wild forget-me-nots at St. David's—they are much later; they grow in very moist places. Keeping the beds supplied with a fresh rotation of plants is one of the clever things in good gardening. Of course we can't do it in war-time, but we are trying to give some brightness to the place. The men like flowers, I think."

"The trees are so fine." He pointed to one. "Personally, I should scarcely miss the flowers. I'm awfully fond of trees, aren't you?"

"I know so little about trees. I wish I wasn't so ignorant on the subject. We are never taught the names of trees as we are of flowers. But the woods in Scotland are beautiful, I think. I prefer them in the winter, don't you?"

"I have never been in Scotch woods—this is my first visit to the North." He looked at his footless leg.

"Oh, I forgot! Of course, you haven't had the chance. Well, in the winter they are wonderful. I really always mean to learn some of the names of the trees I love the most."

"Nisbet's 'Child's Song in Spring' used to help me to remember some of the familiar ones. Do you know it?"

Evangeline shook her head. They were talking as they were walking across a long stretch of grass side by side, talking about trees and flowers, when all the while their senses were singing and ringing with but three words—"You and me," "You and me," and "Me and you." Their inner voices said protestingly, "We are afraid to be real, you and me," "We are afraid to be true, you and me," "We are afraid to be sincere, me and you."

"It goes like this," he said:—

" 'The silver birch is a dainty lady,
She wears a satin gown,
The elm makes the old church shady,
She will not live in town.

" 'The English oak is a sturdy fellow,
He gets his green coat late;
The willow is smart in a suit of yellow,
While the brown beech trees wait.

" 'Such a gay green gown God gives the larches,
As green as He is good!
The hazels hold up their arms for arches
When spring rides through the wood.

" 'The chestnut's proud, and the lilac's pretty,
The poplar's gentle and tall
But the plane tree's kind to the poor dull city—
I love him best of all.' "

Hugh's voice was musical and sympathetic.

"How neat!" Evangeline said. "And those are the sort of things which do help us to remember—a fool like myself, at least."

She turned to go. They were creeping back to intimacy; she felt less strong, less distant.

"When will you play for me?" he asked boldly. "Soon, I hope, for I have got one or two new songs. I'm sure you'll like them."

With a pail in one hand and a seedling-box in the other, Evangeline stood irresolute, weakening.

"I don't know," she said, "I really don't."

"Don't you want my songs any more? I got two songs I thought you would like—I got them on purpose for you."

"I'll come to-morrow, if that will suit, after work hours."

His air of youthful abashment had completely disarmed her; he had spoken humbly, sadly.

"At five o'clock to-morrow?"

"Oh, no—five-thirty." No eyes met his; no smiles dazzled his senses. Evangeline, without a word more, left him. They were of no interest to each other; it was only his songs which she wanted to hear. That was what she wished to imply. But she did not succeed.

While she was hard at work on a wide herbaceous border, she realized how forced and unnatural their manner to each other had been; as she dug the fork into the ground, she dug it in fiercely, her action was expressive of her contempt for her weakness and lack of character. She could have talked to him about

a hundred things naturally and simply if she had kept her wits about her. She could have told him about Alex Hemingway, and of a hundred different things which would have shifted their minds from the danger-zone of personalities. Idiot that she was! And now she had promised to play for him the next afternoon. She was to hear his voice again; he would sing to her as no-one else had ever sung to her before, songs he had bought for her sake. She knew her danger; she knew the anguish it would cause Allan if he knew; and yet, could she have refused to play for him? What excuse could she have made?

The answer to her question lay in the very fact that she was keeping her engagement to Allan a secret. She began arguing against herself, against the necessity of telling Hugh of her engagement. If she had told him at once, she knew that there would have been no songs for her.

Meanwhile, Hugh, limping about the fine old grounds, paused under ancient trees or at his favourite points of view, to hug to himself his secret satisfaction of the fact that all the frankness and intimacy had fled from Evangeline's manner. He did not know why he felt so glad when he should have felt sad. There was no explanation for his gladness. But nevertheless, much as he had longed for the dear blueness of her eyes when they held their frank gaiety for him, he was prouder and more pleased that they had withheld it. The knowledge that she had been horribly embarrassed and ill-at-ease in his presence told him precious, subtle things.

Had she discovered that she cared for him, perhaps a little, while she was all the world to him? Was she resenting the fact that she was not so completely independent and free? Was she determined to cut herself off from him? To go her own way and preserve her heart from danger? If so, her promise to play his accompaniments was a decided concession.

As he limped along, he hummed the air of the new song which he had treasured for her return. Everything, it seemed to him, had been waiting for her to come back—the budding flowers, the fledgling birds, the soaring larks. All the year's green was ready to greet her, and the daisies would kiss her feet as she walked. The late daffodils under the sombre trees would laugh to her in high glee, well pleased that they had bided her return; the white wind-flowers would bend their heads while his lady, like

a shy Rosalind, hastened to her tryst; the pheasant-eyes would wink knowingly, for they always knew.

Hugh was so high in the world's gladness, that the small impediment of a missing foot did not chain his soaring manhood. Achilles, young and swift of foot, travelled no faster than the limping soldier in his fine chariot of desire. He was on crutches, but his mind bore him through realms of gold, high above shoreless seas. Unlike the brave god, his right heel had not proved his vulnerable spot; but love left him forgetful that it lay in the shambles of war, that the whole man he once had been could never be again, forgetful of the fact that in Flanders he had seen hell and tasted of the bitterness of hate. He was young; he forgot the war, as only youth can forget it.

All the world was young to-day; the promise of love peeped at him from every sheltered flower. A wee, brown-frocked wren, no bigger than a queen bumble bee, twitted him, with bright eyes which were all for wifely cares. Cherry blossoms white and cherry blossoms pink seemed to be imitating the flood of colour which had so treacherously played about his Evangeline's throat.

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!" Truly a lovesome thing where Evangeline walked!

* * * * * *

When her day's work was done, a tired Evangeline sat herself down in her cottage-bedroom to write to Allan. She had promised him two letters every week. He was not to expect long ones, for, as she vividly expressed it, they would probably be only breathless messages, mere winged words "from me to you." It was "from me to you" that mattered, the private love tokens from a woman to a man, borne through the night by hurrying trains across desolate country and sorted by casual hands. Those little messages, hidden in the privacy of envelopes—what a world of happiness or pain they convey!

Now that she was back again at Lincluden, with Hugh's sunny disposition dancing before her eyes, she realized how strangely unreal and ecstatic her fortnight in Glastonbury had been. The fortnight had passed, but it was only the beginning of a life there which would have to be lived and endured bravely and smilingly.

When Hugh smiled his eyes almost closed, in a delicious wrinkling way, and his thick lashes brushed his cheeks like a

little child's. Why did she think of them and see them now, when her pen was in her hand to write to Allan? And why did the loss of a foot matter so much less than the loss of a hand? Hugh's hands had never touched hers; their meetings had known of no handshakes. Yet she knew that a lover with hands like Hugh's could dispense with talking. Poor Allan! It was her two hands which had had to do all the caressing, for one hand has no eloquence, no ways of love.

Her letter was a rather longer one than usual, for something urged her to make amends for her thoughts. It was a fine piece of camouflage. No-one would have detected the tragedy which was concealed behind its gay words; no-one would have imagined that the girl who sent it could have looked as Evangeline looked while she wrote it.

CHAPTER XI

At five-thirty the next afternoon Evangeline met Hugh at the entrance to the music-room in which they were to practise his new songs. She was in a lighter humour than the day before and greeted him with one of her old smiles and something of her old sympathy and understanding.

Hugh was looking very well. Exercise had completely restored his good looks. He had been getting about more freely and enjoying his new sense of liberty. His crutches were a great advance from the invalid's chair.

They sauntered down the room to where the piano stood like good comrades, two well-pleased young people.

"It's ripping having you back again," he said. "I stored up all sorts of things to say to you."

"So did I for you," she said, in a voice totally forgetful of her reserve, "lots and lots of things."

Where was the girl of yesterday? Hugh looked at her, and as he looked, Evangeline fenced, she retreated.

"I saw Mrs. Hemingway—I forgot to tell you that yesterday. She knows about the Major."

"You wouldn't tell me anything yesterday," he said. "I was afraid that I had offended you. Were you angry about anything?"

Evangeline pulled off her right glove, a heavy gardening glove. "No, of course not! Why should I have been?" Her eyes looked straight ahead of her, through the big windows and over the stretch of park land. On the grass wild rabbits were frisking and skipping about. "Is there anything wilder than a wild rabbit," she said irrelevantly, "or more enviably free?"

"I know something wilder than a wild rabbit," he said, "but for the moment we were talking about the things which you had stored up to tell me. What were they?"

His words struck her into silence. Had she stored up things to tell him? Why had she confessed it? How furious Allan

would be! And yet Hugh had only repeated what she had unthinkingly acknowledged, what was absolutely true. Her stored-up tit-bits were for the companion who would understand them, appreciate them. Allan had been given the things of commoner clay.

"First tell me what is wilder than a wild rabbit. I have forgotten the things I stored up, if I really did store up anything for you, beyond the news of Mrs. Hemingway, and some facts about the air-raid, which no doubt you have heard already."

"Your spirit or soul is freer than a wild rabbit," he said. "It is the most untamable thing I ever knew."

"You are quite mistaken," she said. "I'm not a bit wild. I used to be, perhaps, but now I'm as tame as a slaughtered calf. Is anything tamer than veal?"

"Are you? I shouldn't have thought it. Your mind belongs to the cavalry of the clouds; it is at home in the homeless heavens."

"You don't really know me."

"You don't know how much I know you, or what I know about you."

"I'm so sick of myself! Let's talk of something else."

"I don't mind what we talk about, so long as you aren't cross like yesterday, so long as we are friends again."

"I wasn't cross. We are just the same as we were before."

"I won't give in! You were horrid. You wouldn't even say you were pleased that I had got some new songs. I began to think that all you had said about my voice was humbug."

"How absurd! Let's begin now."

They had reached the piano, but he held the songs still in his own hands, away from her.

"Let's have some 'Do you remembers?' first, just to tune me up. Do let's play for a few minutes as we used to do!"

"How ridiculous! We've said all the 'Do you remembers?' long ago."

"Do you remember telling me that you never did anything that you didn't like doing?"

"Yes, but we've had that one before—it's a chestnut."

"I want it again. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I said I didn't get all the things I wanted, but that I had never done anything I didn't want to do."

"Well, begin doing something you don't want to do to-day."

"I began long ago. I told you I gardened all day long and spoilt my nails; they are awful."

"Let me look at them," he said regretfully. "Are they really spoilt?"

She held out her right hand. He held it in one of his and made a pretence of examining the nails which were so "awful."

"What a characteristic hand!" he said, as he let it go. "Do you know that we have never shaken hands? I never felt it before."

"Characteristic? What of?" Evangeline ignored his personal references.

"Of you, of course."

"I told you you didn't know me."

"We'll see," he said, "whether I do or don't."

"How can we see, if I don't know what you think you know of me? You may tell any fib you like when I do things."

"I know," he said, "that you are capable of doing any great wild thing you make up your mind to do; you are a good comrade, but your soul is lonelier than the cry of a curlew, and yesterday your voice was sadder than its cry."

"Please don't," she said. "I'm not sad or lonely. I have heaps of dear friends."

"I didn't say you hadn't friends. I also know that you are so much a slave to beauty, so wounded by sadness, that you dread any form of pain or suffering. You try to paddle in the shallows like the wading curlew, just because always you fear the depths. But we can never reach the heights until we have tasted of the depths. The curlew wades and dips his long bill in the shallows; he avoids the depths. But the soul of the depths is in his cry."

"I don't know what you are driving at. I told you I was sick of myself; I hate self-analysis. If the shallows are safer why not stick to them? The curlew is a very wise bird."

"But you are to complete your service of doing what you don't like—that is, talking about yourself to me. Your eyes are like the curlew's voice; they are like our dreams, the expression of our hidden selves."

"*When* are you going to sing?" She moved impatiently.

"Not at all, unless I *can* sing."

"But can't you? Aren't you in voice?" She spoke sincerely. She knew what he meant. His voice was like a harp which is acted on by the winds. She was Aeolus; she was keeping the wind which tuned his voice closed in the cave of her heart.

"I told you that I couldn't sing to order, not even for you. There is something uncanny about my voice; it treats me as it likes. If you have offended it in any way, it won't sing for you."

"You are very personal to-day."

"Because I feel very personal. Don't you?"

"What do you mean by feeling personal?"

"I mean that I am so glad to see you again that only personalities matter, personalities about ourselves, principally about you. I don't care if it is blowing a gale outside, or raining cats and dogs; even the war is forgotten." He laughed. "I don't even care about the aliens being crushed to suffocation in the tube railways. I only really care about enjoying the hour we have together."

"Aren't we going to enjoy ourselves?"

"I am, if you will say that you are a bit glad to be back."

"Of course we are going to enjoy ourselves, for in a way I am glad to be back."

"Then be your old self and I'll sing my very best to you. Such as it is, you can make my voice good or bad; it must have sympathy."

"You speak as if we had known each other for ages, as if I had created your voice, as if you had never sung before you met me!"

"I *have* known you forever, and I felt as if you had been away for more than four years, it was so horribly dull without you. Won't you leave it at that?"

He spread out the song which he had brought to sing to her, rolling it the reverse way to force it out of the coil into which it was curled. His eyes were fixed on the white cylinder. While he flattened out the music, Evangeline pulled off her left glove. Then he balanced himself comfortably on his crutches and against a chair. He was ready to sing.

She had played two bars of the accompaniment before he looked from the music to her hands. As his eyes dropped to the keyboard, Allan's engagement-ring caught the light and declared itself unmistakably.

Evengeline felt him tremble, his crutches crunched against the floor. Then instantly he balanced himself more firmly and stood bravely erect.

With chilled flesh Evangeline played the prelude through in perfect silence. When she had finished it she nodded approvingly; she did not speak or raise her eyes. She must play the song first right through to the end before he sang it. She read music easily and was a sympathetic accompanist.

To-day, with the knowledge that Hugh's eyes were fixed on Allan's new ring, that he had felt the blow which she had been sure it would give him, it took fine self-control and concentration to keep her attention on the music, to interpret its meaning. When she came to the end of it, she quickly turned back to the beginning of the song and looked up at Hugh. Her eyes were haunted, appealing. He was standing silently by her side. His face was white, and he looked ill.

"I think I can manage it now," she said. "Will you try it?"

Her voice was not her own. It had lost its appealing note. Her eyes avoided his. Without waiting for his answer, she began the accompaniment.

Hugh sang one verse—or rather, he tried to sing it. It was a pathetic performance. He began the second verse and suddenly stopped. He had no voice, only a poor little cracked substitute for one. A mocking cackle or choke had followed his last note. It made Evangeline's heart stand still. He turned on his crutches, swinging himself further away from the piano.

"I can't sing to-day," he said. "You hear for yourself I can't. I told you what might happen."

Evangeline's lips trembled. She was on the verge of crying. His collapse was so unexpected.

"Why not?" she asked. "You wanted to sing a moment ago—you said you could."

"You know why I can't sing," he said, "you know only too well."

Evangeline lied. "Indeed I don't, and I want you to sing. Do let me hear this song."

" 'They required of us mirth,' " he said. "Do you remember what the answer was to the Babylonians when they said to their captives, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion'? The unhappy

Israelites replied, 'How shall we sing the Lord's Song in a strange land?' "

"You are too cryptic, and I don't know my Psalms or my Bible."

"You should read the Bible," he said. "It is a fine book, awfully modern and not ashamed of human nature. Like the Jews, I can't sing songs of Zion in a strange land."

"You must be more explicit. A quarter of an hour ago this was not a strange land, you were not in Babylon."

"No, I was in the Promised Land! My voice was tuned to the fairness of Zion, to the songs of gladness."

Evangeline began strumming the air. "I can't follow you. Your conversation proves that you don't know me—I can't understand you."

"Don't!" he said imperatively. "I can never sing that song." He put his hand in front of the music. "Don't play it."

She lifted her hands from the keyboard and clasped them in front of her. Her face was firm and unbending; never was her free spirit wilder.

"Very well. If I can't hear the song, I'd better go. That was all I came for; that was the only thing I was glad to be back for. It was not you, it was your voice."

"Why didn't you tell me about your engagement?" he asked brutally. "Why did you leave me to find it out? Why were you such a shocking coward?"

Evangeline was stunned. His daring thrilled her; it gave her to him more completely than the tenderest love could have done. With trembling fingers she strummed out the tune of the song.

"Wasn't it beastly cruel?" he said, "rather unnecessary? Unpleasant things can't always be shelved, pushed aside. Couldn't you have left the shallows for once, just to have saved me this?"

"I didn't mean it . . . I had no opportunity . . . I . . . I . . . I . . ." She halted.

"You mean you disliked hurting me," he said, "so you hurt my voice instead?"

"Oh no! It will come back! How absurd! Perhaps you are tired. . . . I thought you looked ill . . . say it will come back soon!"

"I don't know. How can I sing songs of Zion in a strange

land? But it really doesn't matter. It was only you I cared to sing to. You won't care now, so *I* don't care."

"But why? Don't say that. Of course it matters. Please don't blame me! I didn't know . . . how could I tell?"

"Ah," he said, "don't lie! Leave me your truth, if you lacked courage!"

"I mean . . . we were friends, we can be friends still. That is what mattered! There was nothing else, there never was anything else."

"There was everything else, of which there is nothing now. I never hoped, I never questioned, I never looked beyond the present. But I knew there was everything, and now there is nothing . . . not even the voice which you imagined could sing to you under any sort of conditions and circumstances."

"Of course your voice is all right . . . perhaps the surprise affected it. No-one ever heard of a voice being spoilt in that way."

"Some day, if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, I may sing songs of Zion in a strange land."

Evangeline rose from the piano. His words were horribly cruel.

"Please tell me about it," he said. "Is it . . ." he paused. "It will be kinder to tell me everything."

"There is so little to tell. . . . He is an old friend . . . he has been fond of me for a long time."

Their eyes met. Evangeline's were anguished. A sudden idea came to Hugh.

"Is it," he said haltingly, "is it the friend who had the accident?"

"Yes, Allan Fairclough, my mother's stepson." She looked up defiantly; she would not be ashamed of her lover. But unable to bear the pain in Hugh's eyes, she dropped her own quickly. Something had changed his expression; something about him now softened her almost to tears. "We loved each other four years ago—before the war."

"And you are very happy?"

"Yes, very." Evangeline visualized her happiness of exaltation. Nothing like it or approaching to it had ever been hers before or since; she was able to speak feelingly.

"Then I must congratulate you," he said. "I wish you the same happiness always."

"Thank you," Evangeline said lamely; his words stung her.

"Is the date of your marriage fixed?"

"Oh no!" The words came like a protest, a quick, eager protest against his daring to shorten the term of her liberty. The anguish in her voice echoed in both their ears; it filled the silence; it told Hugh all that her defiant looks and tightened lips had held back. It gave her secret away completely. Instinctively they both realized it. "Allan is still undergoing treatment . . . nothing is settled . . . there is plenty of time."

"Was he badly wounded? I forget."

"He was not at the front . . . that was the cruel part of it. I told you all about it."

"I see."

"It happened just before he was called up."

"What happened?" For the life of him Hugh could not resist the torture the whole conversation was inflicting upon himself and upon the nerve-racked girl in front of him. He had to hear it all and be done with it; he had to probe the nakedness of her love.

"He was at an aerodrome. A propeller caught him as he passed it. He was too close. I thought I told you all about it."

"And what did it do to him? If you told me I have forgotten. He was not of the same importance at the time you told me."

"He has no right hand. He was an ear-specialist."

"I am ambidextrous. What a pity it wasn't me!"

"What does that big word mean?"

He laughed boyishly. It was so like Evangeline to pretend that she did not know the meaning of it.

"I can use my left hand just as easily as I can my right. It makes no difference to me which I write with or play games with."

"How useful! Allan can't. His career is ruined, of course."

"Unfortunately I lost my right foot instead of my right hand."

"Oh," she cried, "don't say that! One hand is hateful! Having only one foot matters far less . . . it is really almost nothing. Having only one hand . . ." she shivered, and then shamedly and guiltily she blushed. But her confession was

made. One hand was hateful! Of course it was hateful. Two hands to clasp with, two hands to hold with, to enter into the love's ways with as fondly as two lips. . . . But she must not say it; poor Allan had not lips to kiss with. Hugh's lips were young and fresh; Allan's were half-imprisoned by his hateful mask. Hugh must never know that the left side of Allan's mouth was drawn and torn, far better concealed and unkissed.

"I believe you're right," he said. "I think I am lucky, but if your friend got off with the loss of one hand, he was lucky too, when you think of the evolutions of a propeller!"

"Oh, but he didn't!" Evangeline's words rushed from her lips. "Allan's face was injured. He has lost the use of one eye, as well as his right hand." Her wild, haunted eyes braved Hugh's. As she gazed at him, a revulsion of feeling changed Hugh's passions, devastated him. Noises sang in his ears; a throbbing like the sensation of steaming water poured on tender skin hurt his physical body. The next moment a flood of exaltation filled him. He could have broken into a wild and glorious song, a song of Zion, a song of deliverance.

His spirit was no longer in the wilderness. He was beholding Jerusalem. His voice had not forgotten its cunning; the harp which he had hung upon the willows was tuned and ready for his thanksgiving, thanksgiving that his beloved's heart had not gone with her gift of sacrifice, thanksgiving that she was a thousand times more wonderful than all his dreams in Flanders had revealed her to him. She was the fairest and bravest among women. Out of pity, and from the tenderness of her heart, she was going to marry this disfigured man; she was sacrificing herself to atone for the small part she had played in the tragedy of his accident. This fine act of self-sacrifice was to be the greatest of the great wild heroic things which he had told her that her nature would rise to, one of the headlong things which her pity for the suffering of others would drive her to do.

A passionate relief strengthened him, a glorious pride in the girl who stood despairingly before him filled his lungs with the desire to sing. It was Hugh's conscious expression of his sudden understanding of her engagement.

In his subconscious self there was a hellish satisfaction, a ghoulish feeding on his rival's pitiful engagement. On the girl's part it was empty of love; it was barren of passion. Of Love's

bewilderment it held nothing. There had even been a horror of his one hand, a haunted shrinking from his disfigured face.

This vindictive enjoyment would have made Hugh hideous in his own eyes had he realized it. Its silent invasion of his lower self was undreamed of by the higher man. The loss of one foot scarcely mattered, so Evangeline had said—the loss that was his. She had said it unthinkingly. The loss of a hand was hateful. She had been afraid to tell him of her engagement! She had allowed him to find it out. If she had loved Allan Fairclough, she would have told him of it naturally and happily, for love is proud of its conquest, and a fine woman is ever proud of her surrender. His wild fireweed of the Grand Pré meadows was still untamed; she was still the captain of her soul. She had made no sweet surrender. She had merely conferred an act of charity on a victim of mischance. Her engagement ceased to matter, since her love was still ungiven. Jealousy as cruel as the grave made Hugh's mind as hideous as Allan's face. The mind can work in its own or in God's mysterious way, even while the lip-service of the outward man plays an opposite and important part. Hugh had expressed to Evangeline his sympathy and regret for Allan's horrible accident; he had appeared to her singularly sensitive to his affliction.

Evangeline had accepted his congratulations quietly and with considerable dignity. His impersonal tone strengthened her self control.

"His is such a broken life," she said, "so different from what he had planned."

"Hundreds of men are in the same position—professions ruined, businesses gone to pot, comfortable homes broken up for ever," he said.

"I know, but that really doesn't make one's own tragedy any less awful, does it?—any easier to bear? To be one of ten thousand isn't any compensation for an eye and a hand. It heightens the tragedy, I think."

"You are going to turn his tragedy into a romance."

"If there is happiness left in the world for us, it may come through trying to make others less unhappy."

"Forgive me for being so boorish," he said quickly. "I didn't mean to be, I didn't understand. Will you please play the song

again, and let me try if I can sing it? Let me wipe out all my ill-humour!"

She noticed the note of renewed vitality in his voice, the return of his youthful eagerness to please. He looked self-confident, happy. Her conscience pricked her. He had imagined things which she had not said. Why had he changed?

She seated herself at the piano and he sang the song. When he had finished, she swung herself round on the piano-stool with her back carefully turned to him. She rose abruptly and fled from the room. He had not seen her face; he had not looked at her while he was singing.

When the door behind her shut, Hugh seated himself on the piano-stool which she had vacated. His crutches fell to the ground; he had need of his arms to bury his head in. Shame and delight fought for dominance. Love waved its banner of victory, shame retreated.

He knew that he had sung better than he had ever sung before. He knew that it was a song of triumph. He knew that Evangeline had fled for the guarding of her honour. His song had been devoid of honour; it had had nothing to do with sacrifice; it had been scornful of all but love's urgency and love's desire.

He remained lost to his surroundings. He had given vent to his love in the manner in which he could best express it. Had it been fair and just of him to do so? Was it playing the game, either with Evangeline or with the absent man? His own love for Evangeline was doubled; it had become an actual living thing when he heard of the deed which she was prepared to do. Had he made it any easier for her to do it? Had he not taken an unfair advantage of her? Her sudden flight, her evident wish to hide her face from him, not to let him see what she felt, not to shame the absent man, had told him all he needed to know. If she did not love him—though it was a vain thought, truly, for a penniless curate—she had behaved as if she did. And if she did not yet feel certain of her love, he was very certain of her lack of a lover's love and passion for the man she was going to marry.

The song had shown her the barrenness of her love for Allan. It had revealed to her the fact which she had tried to ignore—that she herself was capable of feeling all that the song expressed. Was her lack of love for Allan Fairclough alone

accountable for her flight? Was she conscious of the new and beautiful sense of danger which they felt in one another's company, this quickened consciousness of each other's nearness, this miserable happiness which is inseparable from love?

Nothing of these feelings had been theirs between them before she went away. She had brought them all back with her. She had brought them in full flower and planted them in their garden of content.

* * * * * *

It was supper-hour before Hugh left his seat in front of the piano. The reaction which he was bound to feel had not yet set in. He scarcely cared a rap that on her left hand flashed the ring which bound her to another man. He was in the mood to care for nothing in the wide world but the passion in her eyes, and the sweetness of her scarlet lips. Her haunted eyes held his happiness and Allan's tragedy.

Thus the wine of triumph throbbed in his veins. If he had taken her in his arms at the end of the song, what would have happened? He would not answer the vain thought. Things were better, more supreme, as they were—the uncertain certainty, the bitter-sweet, the unsatisfied desire.

Hugh was temperamental as all artists are. In the gloaming of this Scottish spring he scarcely belonged to earth; his one foot never trod the ground. His love for Evangeline was tremendously human, but in his quality of love there was the artist's spiritual visualizing of love. For it is not the most faithful lover who loves the most spiritually; it is not the domesticated mate, who takes unto himself habits and a wife, who sees the beauty of passion, the poetry of love's consummation.

Hugh loved Evangeline and with his love he offered her the spiritual passion of a nature which, with many of the failings of an artist, has the artist's abhorrence of unloveliness in dreams and things.

His love was as reckless of the future as Evangeline had desired Allan's to be in the days when the world knew not war. It was reckless because until now he had desired nothing more than that his days in the great garden should hold Evangeline.

"Violet-crowned, pure, sweet, smiling Evangeline." That was how Alcaeus had described Sappho. That is how he thought of

Evangeline. How often he had said the haunting lines to himself in Flanders!

"Violet-crowned, pure, sweet, smiling Evangeline!"

* * * * * *

Violet-crowned Evangeline was at that moment sending in her resignation as an unpaid worker at Lincluden.

A fine drop from the blue for Mr. Hugh when he learnt what her slowly-written note contained!

CHAPTER XII

WHILE the affairs of Evangeline have been usurping the limelight, the story of Alex Hemingway has been advancing step by step to the strange fulfilment of her destiny.

When Evangeline left London for Glastonbury, Alex set about making preparations for her journey North for her visit to her husband. Her boarding-house was now so well established, and the war had changed the habits of her boarders so greatly to her advantage, that it was not the impossible thing it would have been in pre-war days to leave her two houses in charge of her willing servants and to luck.

She arrived at the officers' convalescent home where Larry was waiting for her on a beautiful but stormy afternoon.

At the door of the handsome country house which had been converted into a convalescent home for officers, Alex was told that Major Hemingway was in the garden. One of the nurses said that she would take her to him.

Alex was looking very pretty—and what was still better, effective and picturesque. Remembering Larry's appreciation of fine feathers and his critical eye for a well-turned-out woman, she had lived up to the part; she looked no boarding-house landlady. Her hair, which once he had so loved, shone as brightly and healthily as the copper beech on the lawn. Her eyes, which were made for tears, and her lips, which were made for love—Larry had first said the words to her—lacked little of their old beauty. She was excited, nervous. It was a dramatic moment. Her pride had made her anxious to do justice to herself—to do more, to do justice to her independence, to her unwifely flight from matrimonial bondage.

The undefinable qualities which make a woman desirable and exciting to a man's senses, had always been Alex's. Even in her exhausted days, they had not deserted her. Whenever she chose to exert her charms, she never failed to captivate even her own sex. As she had determined that she would take

Larry back, she was equally determined that he should want to come; he should recognize what other men recognized and desired in her. She was not going to take back a bored and condescending wreck, who would accept her sacrifice as a matter of course. Her animation was becoming; the nurse admired her enormously.

When she arrived at the spot where Larry was pacing up and down a sunny walk in an obvious state of agitation and nervous expectancy, all her prearranged plans and ideas fell from her. She forgot herself, and her rehearsed meeting, for there before her was the old Larry, the young and amazingly handsome Larry, the lover who had meant more to her and been to her what no other man could ever be. Instead of the war having aged him, it seemed to have rejuvenated him. It had washed away all traces of carelessness and mental indolence.

Before the nurse their greeting had to be what publicity permitted, nothing more. The nurse was totally ignorant of the true situation. As he came to meet her, he lost nothing in Alex's eyes by his embarrassment and humility.

When the nurse left them Larry turned to his wife and said, "It was most awfully good of you to come, Alex."

Alex thought it was good of her to come, but what could she say?

"You had no need to," he said. "I never expected you to."

"You have been fighting; you were wounded. Besides, the war has changed everything, all of us. I had to come."

"It was most awfully good of you." He paused, and then said apologetically, "Do you mind telling me . . . how the kiddie is?"

"You will soon see him. He's splendid! He's been at school for some time—he's quite a boy now."

"How the time has passed!" he said nervously. "A lifetime seems to have been gobbled up by the war." He was gazing at his beautiful wife, at the transformation which had taken place in the worn-out, faded girl of Canada. If he had been accountable for her past condition, it was splendid of her to come.

"When did you join up?" Alex asked. She was feeling embarrassed by his scrutiny. They both found it hard to be natural.

"In September, 1914."

"Oh, the first year!" Her eyes thanked him.

He smiled at her in his old irresistible way, and Alex felt it. She felt as if some strong wine was suddenly affecting her veins.

"You are a wonderful person," he said. "You don't look a day older than you did when I first saw you—really you don't."

"Oh, Larry, not a day older, when I'm as old as the things before the beginning of days!"

"Canada killed your youth; but you've got it back again—completely. I never saw such a marvellous change in anyone."

"I feel stronger." They were talking brokenly, distantly. Her reason for coming had not in the least explained itself. She began trying to get nearer to the subject by telling him what she had been doing, how she had earned her living, how well her business had succeeded.

"It is quite a good going concern now," she said proudly. "It gives us a home, and it will grow. I can't take in nearly all the applicants I have for rooms." She paused, and then said nervously, almost apologetically, "You see, Larry, I had to do it. Tony had to be thought of. We were drifting to absolute poverty."

"I know," he said, "I have never blamed you. I'm a rotter—you did what was wisest and best. I was at my wit's end when the war broke out; I'd have dragged you down."

"And now you are a major."

"I rejoined my old Regiment. It's a wonderful life—I ought never to have left it! I never wanted to."

Alex blushed. "You left it because you wanted to marry and we thought we were going to make a fortune in looking for moths in the forests of the Limberlost!"

"I left it because it was all 'swank' on my parents' part that put me into a Regiment they couldn't afford to keep me in decently. The war has changed all that; I can afford it now." He looked at his empty sleeve. "Or I could!" he said bitterly.

Alex looked at his arm. He saw her effort for self-control.

"Have you made any plans? Will they do anything for you—the Government, I mean?"

"Who knows?" He spoke casually, but his words did not

hide what Alex detected, his utter loneliness. "I shall get along on my right arm pension."

"Larry," she said nervously, "a home is waiting for you. Tony is expecting you. Will you come?"

He stopped his rapid walking. They had been doing a sort of quarter-deck exercise together in the sun.

"You can't mean it?" he said. "You don't want me back? I never meant to bother you, I assure you I won't!"

"I came to invite you. I told Tony that his father was wounded, that he had been found in the war. He has been quite satisfied with the fact that you were lost out big-game shooting."

"I treated you too damned badly! You have no need to do this. I'm probably no better than I was, although I've seen enough to change any man."

"I'm sure you have, if you've been in it since 1914. You deserve a good home."

"Does the leopard change its spots? As your husband, what shall I be again?" He looked at her tenderly. "I spoilt your life once, Kiddie; don't give me the chance of doing it again."

The old name, the old quality in his voice, brought tears to Alex's eyes. The neglected woman, her blistered hands, her weary body, were forgotten. Here was the old Larry calling her "Kiddie." He was her husband; she had lain by his side; she had borne him a son. Above all, greater than all, he had bled for England. He had endured those years of the war-hell for England. Their intimacy was reborn; it could never be obliterated.

"You won't spoil it, Larry," she said quickly. The protest came on the top of his words. "You won't, really, because I am different. I have learnt so much, the war hasn't left even me the same."

"You are just the same," he said, "wonderfully the same. For you the years seem to have rolled back. And, honestly, if I treated you like a cur, I never excused myself; I never blinded myself to the fact that you were what you are—the bravest woman I ever met, and the loyallest. What a beast I was!" He looked at her admiringly.

"Oh, Larry, I was such a young fool, so disappointed and unhappy because married life was real and not what I dreamed

it would be—always living with an adoring lover. I was intolerant of the lover turned into a husband."

"You had to put up with far more than that. Have you been happy without me?" He never for one moment thought of Alex as anything but faithful to him. A very definite aura of sexual faithfulness, tenacity, which perhaps Alex scarcely merited, assured him of this fact.

"Yes, Larry, extraordinarily happy, because I was interested and successful, successful beyond all my hopes, and because the daring thing I did seemed to me justified. I was responsible for Tony's life; I would not and could not have it ruined."

"It was justified. And if you are happy, why should I return?"

"Because I want you. Now that I know you are here, and that you have fought for my home and Tony's, I want you back. I really do. Our home will never be the same again, unless you come to it—that is to say, if you want to."

Neither of them spoke. The wild northern clouds were scudding across the sky, covering and uncovering stretches of azure blue, as they travelled with the stiff breeze. Silently the husband and wife watched the splendid masses of grey-white clouds drift together and form a huge rugged mountain in the sky.

Alex felt that their silence might last forever. She turned her eyes from the cloud mountains in the deep blue above to the man at her side. His eyes sought hers. They loved her. A swift surging passion quickened her blood; it tore through her veins. The wonderful old days of her love were with her; they were but yesterday. The log-hut days had receded; they were of little moment.

"Do you want to come, Larry? Do you want your home and your son?" Alex felt both ashamed and afraid of herself, afraid of the sex influence which Larry alone had over her.

"It is best to be plain with you," he said. "You deserve it. The truth is, I want you madly." He turned to her quickly. "Believe it or not—it's hard for any woman to understand—but I have been faithful to you, after a manner, insomuch that you have always been my ideal, my woman. I repeatedly abused my love for you; I even tried to persuade myself that I was indifferent to you. I knew it was a lie; I knew that the small soul I possessed clung to you, was desolate without you. Yet know-

ing all this, I never denied my lower nature its satisfaction. I was born like that."

Alex's heart knew the truth of his statement. She knew that men with the temperament of Larry can be faithfully-unfaithful. They can love their wives, while they deny them comforts to bestow luxuries on bought women. She was conscious that in his own manner he had been faithful to her. He had spoken the truth. She had possessed the spiritual side, the beauty of his passion; they had been hers only. His journeyings after other women, fresher and more amusing than herself, had caused her little jealousy. They had been mere excursions, the youthful hankering after strange company, untrodden ground. After her marriage, when she had settled down to the deeper knowledge of things, these shortcomings in his character, his lack of moral standpoint, his desire for change, his abhorrence of matrimonial ennui, seemed more his inherited failings than his own fault. Larry was made like that; he saw and felt like that. His sins were not sins against the Holy Ghost. He saw more beauty in the sins of commission than in the Christian virtue of renunciation. Renunciation was waste, hypocrisy, the staying of youth, the perversion of nature.

"I want you madly." The words were spoken with a ghastly earnestness. They vibrated through Alex. "Can I come back to you under these circumstances? Or do you mean that I must be a stranger in your house, a free boarder?" He spoke bitterly. "Mind you, I deserve nothing more—not so much!" He looked at her. "But you make me feel damnably human—you must consider that fact."

He paused. Alex was incapable of thought. Events had taken such a strange turn.

"You are very beautiful," he said. "No, don't interrupt what I must say. You are beautiful again, and you offer me a home! Keep me well outside it, treat me as I deserve to be treated, but don't invite me to your home and then expect me to live in it as a stranger." His eyes held no hope. Women, not men, think these domestic situations possible!

His wife laid her two hands on his breast and spoke into his eyes.

"Larry, I came to offer you a wife as well as a home. Let us begin all over again, call nothing anyone's fault, scrap the

whole business." Her soul was in her demand. She was superbly feminine, virtuously sensual. Her bright head was pressed to his coat, her lips kissed his empty sleeve, the token of his sacrifice to humanity. It made him infinitely worthy of her surrender.

He did not raise her head. Her kisses were sacred; they were her tribute to the offering which he had laid on the altar of war. He doubted still if as a man, apart from his worth as a soldier, she could ever have forgiven him.

Alex glanced up. "Don't try to settle things by words, Larry. We just at last understand each other! You haven't told me anything about your years in France, of how you got your wound. Would you rather not?"

Her thoughts flew to Franklin Gibson. How completely she had forgotten him until now—the strong man, the man who had made her return to her husband! Something self-depreciating and guilty made her averse to dwelling on his memory. In her guilt there was the consciousness that never for one moment had he roused in her anything like the feeling which she now had for Larry, and yet she had thought she cared for him. Even at Tregaron on that eventful morning when he gave her the pearl locket, and the delightful assurance came to her that he loved her, she knew that she did not really love him. She had only loved his love for her; her passion had only been roused by the knowledge of his intense and devout feeling for her. Away from him, she was away from his love, away from all but her appreciation and her gratitude for his passion and manly tenderness to her. It was his goodness and his admiration for herself that she treasured. It had helped her spiritually; the sense of rest and security which his presence always gave her had made her visualize wifehood with him as the perfection of peace.

With Larry she felt herself very far from all such perfection of peace. He was her man. As her lover she knew that his virtues and moral imperfections and failings had gone unquestioned. It was the man himself she loved. His old charm for her echoed in her senses in a hundred ways. It was a charm which Franklin with all his virtues completely lacked. It was that charm which—God knows why—often belongs to the least deserving and is denied the wholly worthy. As she had once Loved Larry, she could love him again, and the knowledge of

it shamed her while she thought of Franklin. He had imagined that she was going to make a sacrifice, obey the higher dictates of her conscience. She found herself doing nothing of the kind. It was almost immoral. It certainly was, from the spiritual truth of the thing.

When Alex, for convention's sake and to avoid undue excitement, had asked Larry if he would rather not tell her about his war experiences, he had evaded her question by telling her some trivialities. He made very little of his wound. Like all soldiers, he hated talking about himself. He did not know that Alex knew the very man who had saved his life.

"We won't talk about that episode, if you don't mind," he said, referring to his wound. "I was awfully lucky to have got off so cheaply."

Naturally Alex did not refer to it again. She appreciated his wish to make very little of the loss of his arm when he was luckier than twenty thousand others.

* * * * * *

Alex had taken rooms in the village near the hospital. For a week she spent every morning and afternoon with Larry. He had on the occasion of their second meeting insisted upon her leaving the subject of his returning to her undecided until the eve of her departure, and even longer. It seemed wiser to do so. He recognized the spirit in which she had come to him; he wished her to feel more certain that her feeling for himself would permit of her carrying out her intentions with a human possibility of happiness for them both, and without spoiling her well-deserved independence. As there had never been any quarrelling or incompatibility of temper between them; as her leaving him had been for Tony's sake; and, as she had said both to herself and to Franklin Gibson many times, if Larry had been well-off they might and probably would have been "happy ever after," there was not so much to live down. There were no cruel, unforgettable words to erase from their souls. Cruelty had played no part in Alex's determination to be free, if neglect can be distinguished from cruelty.

Under these circumstances it was easier for them both to spend the days which they had together amiably and unconstrainedly. Larry could always make himself a charming companion. He desired to be one now, for his wife's beauty

and his sincere admiration for her, made him very proud and glad to please her. He was playing no part; he was not "sucking up," to use Tony's schoolboy phrase. He was simply trying to engage the attention and interests of a charming woman who, in her fresh attitude towards him and in her more developed womanhood, had the claim of a strange woman upon his senses. She excited and stimulated him; he wished to be at his best in her company.

CHAPTER XIII

It was on the afternoon of the last day but one of Alex's visit that a curious incident happened, an incident which threw a light on much that Alex had not expected, an incident which affected in a purely feminine way her feelings for the man who, apart from the loss of his right arm, had during these days together, appeared to her fairly fit and well. Larry had, it was true, persistently avoided and shrunk from talking about his personal experiences in France. Alex had learned day by day how carefully he avoided the subject, with the result that she knew very little about his adventures or about his life as a soldier. She admired his modesty, and remembered vividly his dislike of discussing unpleasant episodes.

On this last afternoon they were walking together near a small farm which lay about a quarter of a mile from the hospital gates. They were talking interestedly and happily when quite suddenly two very fine black Berkshire pigs came running and grunting down the road towards them. They approached Alex and Larry with an ugly, small-eyed, all-seeing look.

As it never entered Alex's head to be afraid of the animals, she was astonished when Larry clutched hold of her and cried out in an agony of terror. When she looked at him, she saw that he was literally convulsed with horror. Two wild lions could not have frightened a timid woman any more than the pigs had frightened her husband.

She was amazed at his pitiful condition, which instantly recalled to her the fact that he was an invalided soldier, and that the sister of his ward had warned her that he was still suffering from shell shock, a fact of which she had seen little evidence.

She now realized that she had been deceived by his fine colour and bearing, that what the nurse had told her was true.

Like a terrified child Larry clung to her. When one of the frightened animals brushed against him, he fainted and fell

to the ground. The pigs were still behaving like fools, they angered the alarmed Alex to distraction. With a wild swoop of her arms and a shout, she drove them headlong down the road.

The only thing to do was to drag Larry to the side of the road and restore him to consciousness. Then she would have to run to the hospital for help. The ugly animals had disappeared, she was relieved to think that they were out of sight.

But alas! her husband's recovery was no easy matter. A thousand fears seized her. Had she only found Larry to lose him? Would he never regain consciousness? Was he past restoring? Had ever anyone been so long unconscious before? Could she leave him and go for more experienced help? She had done all that she could, but it was no good. He remained to all appearances a dead man. But, thank God, she had found him and forgiven him! Thank God they were friends!

His unconscious state distanced him so infinitely from her that she felt that she must call to him in heaven. It had brought to her what death brings to wives who have loved their husbands, a complete blotting-out of all the wrongs and evils they have suffered at their hands. That revival of love which comes with death was Alex's, while Larry, dead to her entreaties, lay under the pitiless sky. The old, dear, foolish days filled her anguished mind. With the marvellous rapidity of thought she saw in the unconscious man, the gay, ardent, compelling lover of her happiest days, the intrepid hunter, the brave soldier, the young father of her boy.

With the force of despair, she thrust his head down again almost to the ground. She had tried this remedy before, but it had failed. As she kept his head doubled down for the second time, a slight tremor passed over his face; her watchful eyes saw it. This time he was responding to the only method she knew of restoring the fainting to consciousness. She lifted up his head to see if she was right, if he was at last showing any signs of life. His lips moved—or rather, they shook piteously. He was reviving, but so slightly, that to her anxious eyes he looked even worse than he had done while he was unconscious.

She took his face in her hands and cried piteously to him to come back. "Don't die, Larry! Tony wants you . . .

I want you. We are to be lovers again, just as we were once. Oh, Larry, don't die!"

The unconscious man did not hear her words, but something of her eagerness and her desire for him probably reached his subconscious-self. The superman, which had not been affected and rendered unconscious by the sight of two fat black pigs had heard the cry of the forlorn woman. His helplessness, as he lay in her arms, slowly returning to consciousness, aroused all the beauty and tenderness in Alex's maternal nature. The man in her arms was dependent upon her; he was her child, her husband and a suffering soldier all in one. An unsuspected danger had attacked him, had showed its hideous head. A superb strength rose up in her, made her eager to fight it. As a mother, she was a primitve, combatant, defensive female. And Larry was at the moment more her lost and erring child given back to her than the husband from whom she had flown.

As Larry, ably supported by her arm, dragged himself back to the hospital, he was exquisitely sure of her sympathy and understanding. It was so like Alex not to be in the least scornful, or even astonished, at his absurd display of broken nerves. It was so like her not to desire one single word of explanation. And for the very life of him he could not at the moment bring himself to tell her why he had behaved as he had done. His head was swimming; he was very tired, physically and mentally tired. He had lost confidence in himself again; the old enemy nerves had mastered him. He felt sorely humiliated and a mere creature for pity in Alex's eyes.

When the nurse, to whom Alex briefly stated what had happened, took Larry under her care, he said shamedly to Alex, "I was a silly ass—forgive me if you can."

"Forgive you, Larry? Don't make me cry! There is nothing, dear, in the world to forgive! If I had been in France since 1914 one white piglet coming amiably towards me would have been enough to send me crazy, let alone two horrible, grunting, hideous sows!"

Larry shivered, and again the look of haunted terror came back into his eyes, the look which had astonished her before he fainted. The nurse shook her head at Alex, who had obviously stepped on thin ice, so she turned and left him with an assumed air of cheerfulness.

The next morning, when she was preparing him for the fact that she had come to say good-bye, that she had to return to London—that their temporary parting could not be postponed, as her business really needed her—he said nervously, "Did I disgust you horribly yesterday?"

"Oh, Larry, of course not! No one can account for the queer things which will affect nerves when they are rotten. Just think what yours have had to stand!"

"I can account for it," he said. "Will it bore you to listen to the reason?"

"Of course not, but should you tell me? Isn't it wiser to let things alone? I really quite understand. . . . I didn't think anything about it—it is just overstrained nerves."

"But I'd rather tell you," he said. "I'd sleep better if I did. You can't want to have a beastly coward back in your everyday life, Kiddie!"

"You a coward? Don't shame me, Larry—I'm so proud of you!"

He looked at his wife. There was actually love in her eyes! There was so much of the girl Alex who had kept nothing back when she had given herself into his careless keeping, that he had to fight back the desire to kiss her quivering face and make love to her exquisite eyes. How often he had kissed them! How often he might have kissed them when his kisses were desired!

"I was left for dead on no-man's-land," he said. He spoke in a meaningly cold, passionless way. "I had crawled into a shell-hole. I had to lie as still as a dead man for twelve hours, so still that if I had moved my wrist from under my temple I should have been shot instantly. The enemy were watching for the slightest movement amongst the dead. It's odd how it's the little things that always matter. I shall never forget the agony my wrist-watch caused me; for all those motionless hours it was pressing itself into my temple, just close to my eye." He put his finger up to the place.

Alex could only say, "You poor dear! You poor, poor dear!"

"Don't," he said. "I only want to explain." He took her proffered hand and held it in his, possessively, eagerly. His eyes fell on her wedding-ring. "You still wear it?" he said.

"Of course," she said. She raised it to his lips.

He kissed the ring, and then each soft finger-tip. He was still more afraid than sure of her. He had done so much to lose her, so little to gain her.

"Well," he went on, "when the enemy was convinced that we were all dead, or that no wounded there was worth their powder, they left us alone. I had hoped to endure until the R.A.M.C. found me in the shell-hole, but I couldn't. The hawks and other beastly birds of prey which are always waiting to attack the helpless are bad enough; the R.A.M.C. have to keep shooting them off while they are rescuing the wounded. They are amazingly determined, and a horrible sight. But I had become used to them on the battle-fields. It was the coming of the pigs . . ." He paused, and shut his eyes. "They were such an unexpected horror. . . ."

"Don't, Larry! Please let's talk of other things. This is awfully bad for you."

"Let me get it off my chest," he said. "It's absurd to mind so much, but I suppose I was very weak, just in the silly condition to receive some impression which becomes indelible. I think there must have been some farm not far off, for suddenly, and apparently from nowhere, a big horde of black pigs came amongst the dead and the dying. They began grunting and grovelling and routing about, throwing over corpses as they uproot turnips or anything else that is buried. There seemed to be scores of them, hungry, lean beasts. Their wee searching eyes, their monster snouts, came nearer and nearer. I couldn't stand it. At the risk of being sniped and killed by a bullet, I crawled from my shell-hole. I was bleeding pretty badly, but I managed to get safely off no-man's-land, crawling on my stomach all the way, and through a small wood and out into a road which ran above it. It was there that I was found. I don't know any more, but . . . my God, why can't I forget it?"

Alex was crying.

"Don't cry, Kiddie, please don't! It was just one of those things that never would have affected me if I had been in a less critical condition. I was used up, bleeding like a calf."

"Oh, Larry," she said, still weeping, "it's the most horrible

thing I ever heard of! I never imagined such things." Her face was drenched with heavenly tears.

"Dear Kiddie!"

She looked up. Her eyes were proud, passionate, entreating. He laid his lips on their wet lashes.

"Oh, I'm so glad I've found you. I can never do enough for you! I want to spoil you for the rest of your life."

"May I come back, pigs and all? Can you do with such a fool? Heaven knows when I'll be quite myself again—if I ever am!"

"Yes, you will! I'll nurse you until you are quite well again. Tony will be so proud of you. At school he has hated having no father." She smiled. "He somehow knew that you weren't properly dead, that I wasn't properly a widow." She held up her lips. "We never quarrelled, Larry; we have no hard, cruel words to forgive and forget. . . ."

"Kiddie, I have so much to remember, so much that I must never forget! What if I disappoint you all over again? For although I did my bit at the front, I am nothing more or less than the Larry who was a failure."

"Aren't you going to accept me?" Alex laughed. "Let us kiss, Larry, and be friends. Let us both say we are sorry and that we will be good."

"I could say anything," he cried. "I always could, and at the time I always meant it!"

Alex laughed gaily. "That is quite true, dear, but now you have done something, you have done more than I can ever hope to do!"

As he kissed her lips, she realized that he was the only man who had any right to kiss them, not because he was her husband—that made no kiss right or holy—but because she knew that to no other man could she give the same kisses in return. Larry drew from her kisses and emotions which he alone could inspire. Custom had never dulled Alex's response to his affection, as it had dulled her anguish at his neglect. She had always known that when he beckoned, she came; she had always known that she could only leave him for good when he was absent; a little tenderness, a soft appeal, and she was always undone, always ready and eager to forgive. In her heart, from the moment she first saw him in the hospital grounds, she

knew that he had for her a charm which was indefinable, this man from whom she had fled to save herself and her child from degradation. For any other man her love could only be a cool, colourless thing; their love-making must always compare unfavourably with his. He was the master of her soul.

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Larry, who always seemed to Alex as if he had never grown up, was very old in his knowledge of woman. He loved his wife with a finer and higher love than he had ever felt for any other woman; he loved her in her splendid womanhood far more sincerely than in the early days when he had seen her all dewy from her convent, and instantly determined to marry her. He now desired nothing in the world so much as to return to her and to his son.

So great was his desire that, knowing women as he did, he did not claim from Alex more love and caresses than she offered him. Often what is withheld is sweeter than what is given.

His brief description of his night in France, when the corpse-routing pigs had been the last straw to his broken nerves, drew them much closer together. Her tears had spoken comfortingly to him; her proffered kiss had assured him that as her husband he would not be a stranger.

Alex had reserved for their domestic future the story of his deliverance. She had no desire to complicate matters at present by telling him anything about Franklin Gibson. Larry was to come back to her; there could now be no doubt of that. She was not accepting him as, or expecting him to be perfect, a reformed character, or even a repentant husband who had turned over a new leaf. She was inviting him back because the elements in her as a wife and mother desired his return, because all that he had suffered and done in France so greatly outweighed the things which he had not done in Canada. He was the man whom she had loved and unquestionably could love again, the missing half of herself without which she must ever feel incomplete. Having borne a son to him, she had become, while she was on this earth, a part of him.

If she had married Franklin Gibson she could never have been a part of him, as indissolubly a part of him as she felt herself to be of Larry. She would have been married to one

man while she was bodily wedded to another. "With my body I thee wed." These words had been inexpressibly true.

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When they were within a short time of their parting, which had already been discussed, Larry drew a letter from his pocket and said in a business-like way, "Did you know, Alex, that my cousin Algy was killed in action a month ago?"

A questioning look came into Alex's eyes, her thoughts travelled. "You mean . . . ?"

"Algy who visited us before we went to Canada."

"Yes."

"You may have seen that his father was killed in the battle of the Somme?"

Alex looked alarmed. "Then that means . . . ?" She hesitated nervously; the boy's death was too sad to allow of her spontaneous remark.

"It means that you are Lady Hemingway."

"Oh, Larry!" She laughed, nervously, as if it were incredible.

The baronetcy seemed a long way off when I married you, Kiddie." He sighed. "Poor Algy! Three generations killed by the war! For the war killed my grandfather just as surely as it killed his son, and now his grandson."

"Poor Algy!" Alex repeated. "He was so brilliant, so good-looking, and so absolutely healthy! And only a boy, really!"

"Yes, and so much more worthy of the title than his successor. It's absurd, my being Sir Lawrence, without a penny to my name!"

Alex laughed. "I can't help laughing, Larry. Even in the tragedy of it there is something so comical in you being Sir Lawrence Hemingway and me Lady Hemingway! The boarding-house mistress a titled lady!"

"Three death duties in three years. You realize what that means?"

"I hadn't thought about the monetary part of it. I hadn't got on to that yet. I suppose it means . . ." She paused.

"That we shan't have a penny to keep up the baronetcy on. It's a mere empty title, and living will cost us more. Titles are an expense in themselves."

"But Tony . . . ?" Her eyes were alight.

"Yes," Larry's eyes responded, "the boy may live to enjoy what we never shall, if we husband things decently for him."

"Poor Algy!" Alex looked up; wonderful eyes gazed at Larry. "Is it wicked to feel what I do about it for Tony's sake?" She gave a little sigh. "If it is, I can't help it. I believe I'd sacrifice the world and this war to him."

"It's only human," he said, "it's the only thing about it that I care a fig for. I left the child to fate. It has been a better father to him than I was."

"Being a baronet is going to make you awfully respectable, Larry." She laughed softly. "I have often seen it before—an unexpected fortune makes almost a miser of a poor spendthrift; responsibility or a seat amongst the mighty often . . ."

"Reforms a rake, Kiddie! Let's hope it will, for your sake."

"Don't!" she cried imperatively. "You never were a rake—I won't have that said! I have never even thought it, of Tony's father."

"All right. Only a bit of a blighter?"

They were silent for some moments; both were immersed in thought.

"Isn't it really absurd, the turning of the wheel, the workings of the war? We ought never to be surprised; it is only the expected that never happens."

Alex looked at her watch. "I must go," she said, regretfully, "and we have so much to talk about, to arrange together. Why on earth didn't you tell me this before?" She looked happily bewildered; the tragedy of the death of her husband's cousin was swallowed up in the astounding fact that her son, her adorable Tony, would one day occupy a position in the world which had been her people's.

Larry laughed happily. "Honestly, I didn't think of it—I suppose because I never dreamed you cared much for that sort of thing. You never were a snob, and I'm as poor as ever."

"Heaven defend me from being a snob! But I'm a mother. I think that is all I was ever meant to be."

"We had so much more to say about things which seemed to me to matter far more."

"I know there is so much to talk about. I could go on chattering for hours without stopping. But I really must go."

Their parting was hurried; it had to be. What they said to

each other does not matter. It held little meaning in barren words. It was a parting which almost purged Alex's memory of the log-hut days, the dreary days of her injured vanity.

The war had given Larry a new dignity. Notwithstanding all that he had been, he was now vastly her superior. Her thoughts knelt to him; her conpassion was replete with tenderness. Even though he had truly said that because he had been a soldier in France—and she knew that others could add "a brave one"—there was no reason why he should be necessarily a better husband. Bad husbands are often brilliant soldiers; good husbands too often prove incompetent leaders. Yet be these truths ever so true, Larry was different now. Her eyes saw him differently. She would always remember that he had done things which she honoured, that he had done things which she could never, never do. He had fought for England, offered up his life in the cause of humanity.

Her lips smiled with the pleasure it gave her, his mastership. His high reinstatement in her senses made life very gracious.

CHAPTER XIV

THAT same day, when Evangeline met Alex, who had come to stay the night with her before travelling to London the next day, she noticed at once a subtle change in her friend. Her senses seemed on fire; she was lit up with an inward flame.

Evangeline had been expecting to meet a brave, resolute Alex, a suffering woman determined to make the best of a bad job; a war-wife, returning to the straight and narrow path of matrimonial ennui. Instead of which, a flushed and very beautiful Alex greeted her with a happy smile.

She was all that Franklin had declared that she could be when the work which he had longed to carry out was completed. Evangeline had never seen her so well-dressed before, or so carefully attentive to details.

They kissed affectionately. They were nervously glad to see each other; yet as soon as their greeting was over, they lapsed into silence. They looked at each other with questioning, eager eyes. Neither of them could talk of things which did not matter; it was difficult to begin upon things which did.

Suddenly Evangeline bent forward and, with her face thrust nearer to Alex's, their eyes still on each other's, she said seriously:

"My dear, you are in love. And you are in love again with your own husband."

Alex did not remove her eyes from the almost deprecating scrutiny.

"It is not a criminal act if I am."

Evangeline drew back and stared still harder. "Oh, Alex!" she said; her voice was reproachful.

"May I be in love with Tony's father?" Alex knew that Evangeline was disgusted at her disloyalty to Franklin.

"What's the difference, I should like to know?" Evangeline's voice was amazed, incredulous.

"To a wife there is a world of difference."

"Is there? But you are in love yourself, Alex, not for Tony —I can see it, feel it. Tony only comes into it; he is not the cause of it. You are absolutely flaming with love."

Alex crimsoned.

"It has made you beautiful, Alex." All trace of rebuke suddenly left Evangeline's voice. Her romantic nature was thrilled.

Alex took the girl's face in her two hands and kissed it. "You can't help despising me, can you? But, really, you don't understand; you have never quite understood."

"We never understand even ourselves until some man shows us our real self."

"I know, and only Larry can do that for me. At first, when we met a week ago, I thought that perhaps I was only awfully proud and pleased that Larry had been fighting," she smiled proudly, "that he was no longer a rotter."

Evangeline held her two hands tightly, sympathetically. "He isn't a rotter," she said, "and I told you he was still in love with you; I knew he was. And he is, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes, I think that's all right. He was quite pathetically delighted to see me, and far too forgiving—you know, I did take Tony from him. He never blamed me; he even said I was right."

"And so you are going to live happily ever afterwards?" Evangeline sighed. "Well, well, you'll never be as interesting to other people again. Domestic bliss is awfully boring to everyone but the happy couple. And you were interesting, Alex; for pasts are interesting. Domestic felicity is dull. Can you imagine any author writing a book devoted to married happiness? Heavens! Who would read it? What would poets and novelists do without unhappiness?"

"Oh, I don't think that our future need rob you of all anxiety for our happiness, Evangeline."

"Oh, you don't, don't you? This is more interesting! And yet you are in love—you couldn't look like that if you weren't! I knew it in an instant. You look as if inside you were all on fire."

"Am I so crimson?"

"No, the very reverse—adorably pale."

"Do you find love such a very safe condition to be in? Don't you think a state of negation is perhaps safer than miserable

hapiness? I know that my old feeling for Larry has been to a great extent reborn, but I don't blind myself to the fact that he may always be 'Larry.' I don't anticipate perfect happiness ever after. If my life sounds something like a story-book to you, I assure you I don't expect it to have the 'lived happy ever after' ending, so desired by middle-class readers."

"But you want him."

"Yes, I want him. I want him for more reasons than love. Life is quite different now. Perhaps I am very worldly, Evangeline, but I like the approval of the conventional world. It was only for Tony's sake that I outraged it. I want the nice, respectable feeling of having a husband in the foreground. I want the feeling that I need not shun the society of other ladies with questionable domestic backgrounds. When one has a history, one has to be so horribly particular." She laughed. "Do you know, I have hated all women with unproducable husbands as much as a hunchback hates the sight of another hunchback?"

"You aren't a snob, Alex."

"I am. We all are. It's the humanest of all petty humanities. Perhaps there is a good deal of . . ." she paused, ". . . the respectable side of a cocotte's nature in me. I often think there is. I have kept virtuous according to the world's idea of virtue because I appreciate respectability. By the way," she said, "have any letters come for me? I took the liberty of telling them in London to send my letters to you—I knew you wouldn't mind."

Evangeline gave a little cry and jumped up. "Oh! I quite forgot to give you this—it only came late last night. I'm sorry, Alex—I was so excited about seeing you, it quite went out of my head."

"A telegram?" Alex's words were a cry. Was Tony ill?—that was her first thought. She took the telegram eagerly, almost snatching it out of Evangeline's hand.

She tore the envelope open and read its contents. There was complete silence in the room, even after she had finished reading it.

"Evangeline!" Alex's voice trembled; tears swam in her eyes.

"Yes, dear—what's the matter? I do hope nothing's wrong with Tony?"

"Franklin is dead."

"Franklin dead? I thought he was better. Oh, Alex!"

Alex was stricken, shrivelled. "He died on Thursday. Oh, my dear, my dear, the pity of it! Poor high-souled, tender-hearted Franklin, dead!"

"Heart-failure, I suppose?" Evangeline said the words softly.

"I suppose so." They stood looking miserably at each other.

"Or heartbreak, Alex?—nothing cures heartache like heart-break."

"Oh, don't!" Alex cried. "He must just have got my letter telling him that I had seen Larry, that I was taking him back—it has killed him." A torrent of self-reproach poured from her trembling lips. "I had almost forgotten the best man in the world, and tenderest heart God ever made! I've broken it! My going to Larry has killed him. He always knew everything; he probably knew that I . . ." she paused.

"But he wanted you to go back, he made you do it."

"He made me do what he considered right, but how little he imagined the truth. He never dreamed that I should be really glad! He never dreamed that when Larry kissed me I should know that I had never really cared for anyone else. And yet I would have married him if I had been free." She spoke hysterically. "I knew, when Larry kissed me, when I heard him call me 'Kiddie,' that he had really always only to whistle to me and I'd have gone to him. I have wanted him to kill me with kisses, I even wanted his old brutality— anything, Evangeline, anything but the hunger of these years! Franklin wanted me. He saved my vanity; he brought back sex-interest into my ugly, colourless existence, and he, poor dear! he called me his 'pearl-woman.' I was holier to him than all holy days and things. Evangeline, have you ever hated and despised yourself?"

"I always do, Alex. I have lost faith in myself."

Alex raised her head. Something in Evangeline's voice hurt her. Its sadness was sadder than her own remorse.

"Why do you hate yourself? You have so much to be proud of! You have such a clean sheet." Evangeline's face startled

her. Her haunted eyes, like the eyes of a captured hawk, made her feel ashamed of her own egotism, her self-interest. She had overlooked her friend's affairs. She put her arms round the girl.

"I haven't seen you since your engagement. I have been horribly selfish. Tell me about it."

"I have nothing to tell, except that I am leaving Lincluden. I must get married soon."

"You poor thing!" Alex's embrace tightened. "Is it as bad as that?" Evangeline's voice was lifeless; she looked tragically heroic.

"Oh no, it isn't bad at all! Don't, please, talk of my affairs. They can all be put in a nutshell. As there is nothing to prevent our marriage, why shouldn't we get married?"

"Evangeline, there is something, a very big thing. You told me that you nearly loved the curate you met at St. David's. You do love him now. You told me I loved Larry; I now tell you that you love the curate."

"I was a fool to say such a thing."

Alex, who still held her by the shoulders, shook her affectionately: "You are running away from Hugh Tennant?"

"Well, I shan't run back to him, anyhow."

Alex blushed. "I scarcely ran," she said. "I was driven back."

The words brought Franklin Gibson into their thoughts.

Glad to dismiss her own affairs, Evangeline said, "I wonder who will inherit all his millions? He had no near relatives. He was really a lonely soul until he met you."

"Oh, Evangeline!" Alex flopped into a low chair, her face expressed amazement.

"What's the matter?"

Alex covered her eyes with her hands. Shame had made her cheeks crimson. Through her screening fingers she said brokenly, "Really, it seemed so unlikely that he would die . . . he was slowly recovering. . . . I never gave it a second thought."

"What do you mean? What are you alluding to?"

"He told me that he had left me a fortune. I shall be rich. Before he went to the front he settled everything up. If he was killed, I was to inherit a large sum of money, which is to go to

Tony at my death. If I was ever free, and he could have married me, I suppose I should have had everything." Alex's hands and face were wet with tears. "It seems so brutal, so unfair. He fought for England; he saved Larry's life; and now he is dead, and I have got everything. Besides, he left the money to me thinking that I was sacrificing myself to my duty, doing what was right."

"But, Alex, if he knows he will be delighted, his love for you was a very big thing, and I never met anyone who had such an overwhelming desire to do what was right. He didn't leave you the money because you were unhappy; he left it to make you happier and because he loved you. Isn't it curious how sentimental and romantic these clever business Americans are at heart? You know—or, at least, you don't know—that in the North and South War it was the keen, hard, level-headed, business-men of the North who fought against terrible odds for the most righteous cause that ever a war was fought for. Your English sympathies were, of course, with the more aristocratic South."

Alex laid tear-moistened fingers on Evangeline's wrist, and drew her down on to the arm of the chair. She was trembling.

"Your remark about the aristocracy reminds me that I have something else to tell you. You will never guess what it is," she sighed, "the world seems to have gone mad." She dried her eyes, something like a smile struggled into them. "How pleased Franklin would have been, I can see him looking at me with new eyes, just as he looked at me the day I told him that I owned Tregaron."

"What has happened? Do explain!" Evangeline waved her handkerchief in front of Alex's face to bring back her absent eyes. "Do talk to me and not to Franklin. What else has happened?"

"I am Lady Hemingway—Larry has come into a baronetcy. His old grandfather, his uncle, and his young cousin have all died during the war."

"You are Lady Hemingway?" Evangeline laughed.

"Isn't life extraordinary? I had forgotten the fact, because, as Larry said, there won't be a penny to bless ourselves with—three death duties—and they were a poor family."

"But now, Alex? Now things are different?"

"Yes, I had forgotten that now things are different." Their eyes spoke. "Franklin's death has changed everything. I must begin and think differently."

Evangeline wept unexpectedly. "You certainly are more like a story-book than ever, Alex."

"Don't cry, Evangeline, because if you do I will too. I feel as if the world was mad, or as if I were crazy." She put her hands up to her head. "A husband, a title, and a fortune is a pretty good deal to inherit in one week." She sighed. "It has made me awfully tired, dear, and I have so much to do to-night."

"Lie down and have a sleep; I'll leave you for a bit."

"I will lie down, but I couldn't sleep." She stretched herself out on Evangeline's long chair. Alex had a cat's love for comfortable chairs and cushions. She pulled Evangeline's tall body down until their cheeks were pressed together. They both needed sympathy. "How soft your cheeks are, you dear understanding thing. Sit down here beside me—we needn't talk. Both our thoughts will be with Franklin; poor devout Franklin. His death has made one feel such a fraud."

"It is just the war, Alex, the war with its unending giving and taking and teaching. You mustn't feel badly about his death. His millions couldn't give him you—not the real you—that you are giving to Larry, and they could never have made him happy without you. From the first hour he saw you he was obsessed with the desire to possess you, and now even I can see that you could never have made him happy. It is a different thing, Alex, the doing of great things and heroic deeds, to the going on and enduring their results."

Alex's eyes lit up with understanding. "My dear," she said.

"Now don't begin, Alex . . . don't interpret things wrongly."

"Well, I won't. Everyone must work out their own salvation, outside opinions never change our spiritual convictions."

"If you will try to forget the silly things I said to you in London, you will believe that I don't need your pity, that I really resent it."

"Dearest, I never gave you pity, only admiration."

"I don't need admiration for marrying my old lover!" Alex felt rebuffed. "I want to take off these heavy boots and leggings, and get into female garments. I shan't be long." She

laughed affectionately. "You've become so terribly feminine, Alex, that I feel I must change."

Alone with her own thoughts, the world seemed to be going at such a pace that Alex could not cope with it. She felt that the next thing would be that Evangeline with her speed and falcon-swiftness would be married and heart-broken before she could even put out a hand to hold her back.

Then her mind strayed from Evangeline; she could chain it to no definite subject. She could hear Franklin's weak voice saying, "I should like you to live in Tregaron Manor. I should like to know that Tony was being brought up in his ancestral surroundings."

Then she saw a runaway wife standing at a high window, looking over the deep glen and black woods at Tregaron. She heard the booming of its waters in the Devil's Cauldron. She saw as clearly as if she was standing there the figure of herself, travel-stained and skimpily clad, inspecting her frocks in the wardrobe, where they were hung out in their nakedness.

The whole thing was a dream, a phantasy, except the eyes of the wild girl from Grand Pré. Evangeline was not a dream; her sorrow was as real as the war and as unfinished. What would be its end? Or would it go on for ever, like the hate of Germany, booming and thundering in the air? She put her hands up to her face to shut out something worse. She had visualized the war-pigs routing and churning up the hastily-buried dead.

* * * * * *

Upstairs in the cottage bedroom Evangeline was changing her khaki breeches and top boots for an absurdly unbusinesslike and flimsy tea gown. For the first time in her life she wished that she possessed some face-rouge; she had nothing to "make-up" with and her cheeks were horribly pale. She was always clear-skinned, almost almond-toned; but this evening she was ghastly, and she knew it.

Her tooth-paste was pink. With clever fingers she rubbed some of it into her skin, just a delicate soupçon. It worked wonders. She smiled, well pleased.

"Alex is far better-looking than I am," she said, "and younger —at least, and she can always look better-looking than she is." She smiled tenderly. "But that is Alex all over. She looks prettier than she really is; she seems cleverer than she really is;

and I believe she looks a better woman than she really is. And the strange thing is that she never tries to look or be any of these things."

Before her looking-glass Evangeline practised some radiant smiles and humorous facial tricks. They were for Allan's sake.

"These are for Allan's sake, that is what I must appear to be."

CHAPTER XV

It was the most beautiful season of the year in Scotland. Days of warm sunshine had followed upon two weeks of gentle rain and a moist atmosphere. Things were growing at such a pace that the girl-gardeners at Lincluden found it hard work to cope with Nature. The sticking and tying-up of delphiniums and lupins and other tall herbaceous plants had been Evangeline's special work.

The country was exquisitely beautiful, as clean and clear as a child's eyes are pure and innocent.

As Evangeline stepped out of a wide herbaceous border—or rather sprang from it to the green lawn, to avoid damaging the smaller flowers which were massed in front of the delphiniums, she almost fell over Hugh Tennant, who was lying face downwards on the grass with an open book in front of him. He looked up at her with would-be mischievously mirthful eyes.

"Caught!" he said triumphantly. He had steadied her by catching hold of one of her brown-legginged ankles.

Evangeline looked down at him. It was not humanly possible to steel her heart against his smile. She was too late with her dignity and distance. He gained courage by her betrayal.

"You shouldn't try to catch me in working hours."

"I must, if you so persistently avoid me in your off hours." He pulled out his watch and held it up to her. "Look, it's your eleven o'clock lunch-hour, and I've brought some chocolate."

Evangeline shook her head; but her eyes were becoming child-like.

"You must," he said. He was at her feet; he put his free hand round her other brown ankle. "I could bring you toppling down. Be good and sit down, or I shall do it."

She tried to spring aside. He still clung to her feet, but Evangeline was no ninepin to be easily toppled over. He released her, and held up the chocolate.

"It's no 'substitute'—it's the very best and sweetest."

Evangeline drew two steps nearer. She held out her hand.

"No, you don't," he said. "Not one bite unless you sit down." He looked into her frightened eyes. He thought that they had never looked so blue; but then he always thought that. "If you'll sit down, like a good, obedient girl, I'll read to you and not talk, and you can eat all the chocolate."

Evangeline allowed herself to consider his offer. Could she do it—just sit and eat and listen? It was the talking about intimate things which was dangerous. If he read to her, she could go directly he had finished.

"What is the book?" she asked.

"A collection of verses, 'Poems of to-day.' It contains some examples of the younger poets."

"The Georgians, as precious people call them?"

"Yes, mostly. It's a surprising collection for two-and-six. I treat myself occasionally to a new book." He handed her a slab of chocolate. She was not to be given all the cake at one time; the eating of it was to be drawn out. His tone had become impersonal, reassuring. He tried to look absorbed in the index of the thin volume. She seated herself beside him. "Would you have preferred a cigarette?" He asked the question of her as he would have asked it of a man.

"Oh, no, thanks! I feel like a sweet-drunkard. I can't tell you how I long for candies! I envy the bees sucking honey from the flowers. I wish I knew how to do it. Horatio Bottomley said he wished he was a hen when he was asked to subscribe to the egg collection for our soldiers. I wish I was a bee."

His eyes caressed her. "Eat all of that now," he said. "We soldiers get more than we need. It's too bad—you war-workers are starved." He laid a big, paper-covered square of chocolate beside her on the grass; she had no woman's lap.

"Oh," she said impulsively, "may I eat it all? It's so good, and it's really sweet! But can you get more?"

He shook his head; his eyes were dangerously tender.

"In Canada we all eat so many candies. Mamma and I never used to be without our boxes of chocolates. They mattered more than food." She ate the chocolate eagerly, looking like a pleased child. He could see what it meant to her.

"You're getting thinner," he said. "I believe it's for want of

sugar. What a shame it is! And at the front there is sugar to waste; they throw it on the fires when they won't kindle."

Evangeline laughed. "Make some allowance for my hard work!"

He looked at her. Their minds were naked to each other. His eyes told his understanding of the real reason for her altered looks. "If it is war-work and the lack of sugar," he said, "I can bear it."

Evangeline opened the book. Her eyes were restive, frightened. He began to read the poem on the first page. It was high time to begin on something. Besides, it was one which he liked, and it was well worthy of its prominent place in the book.

"The first poem seems written for this old place," he said. "I'll begin with it.

"'Very old are the woods;
And the buds that break
Out of the briar's boughs,
When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are—
Oh! no man knows
Through what wild centuries
Roves back the rose.'"

He looked at Evangeline. He had chosen well; her eyes were restful. The poem was safe. With her passion for Nature, he could not have selected anything better. She smiled and nodded. The chocolate was sweet; the bees were humming; the flower-border was gay; Hugh's voice was heavenly. He read the next verse. Again their eyes met, frankly, approvingly. The sun and the bees and the trees and the chocolate were working on Hugh's side. Was it the side of good or of evil? "Go on," she said, "I like it."

"'Very old are we men;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales;
We wake and whisper awhile
But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of Amaranth lie.'"

"Who is it by?" she asked. Her voice was less steady. "Like fields of Amaranth"—those four words had brought back

what she had no desire to remember—their talk about "Love lies bleeding."

"It's by Walter de la Mare." Hugh turned over a few pages of the book, selecting here and there a poem, from a wide range of poets, asking her if she knew the writer by name. Evangeline was familiar with Rupert Brooke and John Masefield, and a few of the older writers, some of whom were Victorians. He looked for one particular poem until he found it.

"I am very fond of this one," he said. "It also suits the place, I always think."

"'O dreamy, gloomy, friendly Trees,
I came along your narrow track
To bring my gifts unto your knees
And gifts did you give back;
For when I brought this heart that burns—
These thoughts that bitterly repine—
And laid them here among the ferns
And the hum of boughs divine,
Ye, vastest breathers of the air,
Shook down with slow and mighty poise
Your coolness on the human care,
Your wonder on its toys,
Your greenness on the heart's despair,
Your darkness on its noise.'"

Hugh read as he sang, to her and for her. Evangeline became industrious over picking off the silver paper from a fresh piece of chocolate. She dared not look up.

"Do you like it?" he asked. "It's Herbert Trench."

"Of course I like it!" she said almost resentfully. "It's beautiful—'O dreamy, gloomy, friendly trees.'" Her eyes travelled to the immense limes which were in the distance in front of them. "Trees are so friendly, with all their 'coolness on the human care.'" She kept her head bent, her eyes averted.

"'Their greenness on our heart's despair,
Their darkness on its noise.'"

It was Hugh who spoke. "Trench fits into so many of my moods. The younger poets make Nature a new force in verse."

Evangeline looked at her wrist-watch. Hugh put his fingers over its face. His touch thrilled her.

"Don't be so practical. Listen to this tiny thing by Robert

Bridges. You can work later to-night and make up for it—don't spoil perfection."

"'When June is come, then all the day
I'll sit with my love in the scented hay:
And watch the sunshot palaces high,
That the white clouds build in the breezy sky.'"

Evangeline's face was quivering. Her honour was in the balance.

"'She singeth, and I do make her a song,
And read sweet poems the whole day long:
Unseen as we lie in our hay-built home.
Oh, life is delight when June is come.'

"That is what June and youth were made for," he said.

"It should be set to music," she said evasively. "You could sing it; it would be your style of song."

"I could sing it," he said, "and I could read sweet poems the whole day long, and I would make our hay-built home."

Evangeline was on her feet.

"Have I been good?" he asked. "Did you like the poems?"

She nodded.

"And the chocolate? You big baby."

She nodded again. "It was so good, the nicest thing I've tasted for months."

"Then come and have some more. I'll bring some chocolate to-morrow and we'll read more poems."

Evangeline shook her head decisively.

"Take the book," he said, "and read them to yourself, and then tell me the ones you like the best, and see if they are my favourites."

"No."

"Just point-blank no?"

"Yes, just no."

"And I thought I was so good! Listen to this—this is what I wanted to read to you, and didn't." He rose to his feet and walked with her, saying the poem impetuously, making her listen to it.

"'I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant by the sea,
And seen strange lands from under arched white sails of ships;

But the loveliest things of beauty God ever has showed to me,
Are her voice and her hair, and eyes, and the dear red curve
of her lips.'

"I ought to have written that, not John Masefield."

"Don't! Don't! You are cruel, selfish!" She was trembling.

"I wouldn't have done it if you had said that you would come to-morrow; you brought it on yourself. Men are driven when they love." He was shaking and breathless. "Oh, blue eyes, what mad, bad thing are you doing? What right have you to do it?" His voice broke as it had done when he tried to sing, and just as she had abruptly left him at the last verse of the song which he had sung so triumphantly, so he now turned on his crutches, and without a word Evangeline found herself alone, alone under the breeze-driven clouds, alone, with no noise in the world of stillness, but his voice saying: "Oh, blue eyes, what mad, bad thing are you doing?"

The words sobbed and moaned and lingered.

"What right have you to do it?" What right, when love had so gone out of her keeping? What right had she to go against Nature, to break one man's heart to save another's? Both men were at her mercy, both of them deserved a goodly reward. The one had fought for his country, the other was the victim of misfortune. She looked at the trees.

"'Your greenness on the heart's despair!'" she said. "How cruelly true! 'Your darkness on its noise.'" The noise of her agony needed their darkness. She would seek it.

* * * * * *

After this failure to meet as friends, Evangeline avoided Hugh more carefully than ever. He had not been told of her resignation of her post. They had scarcely met—never to speak to each other—since the morning when he had read aloud the poetry to her. She had now only one week more at the hospital. He realized at last that her desire to avoid him was right and necessary if her engagement to Allan was to be taken seriously, if it was to lead to marriage. At first he had refused to believe that such was the case; he could not believe that any man in Allan's condition could be selfish enough to marry a girl with Evangeline's temperament, to marry a girl whom he certainly must know did not really love him.

He had not reasoned with himself about his own love for

Evangeline; he had never even pictured to himself a more concrete state of affairs than the fact that they loved each other. He knew that now, he knew it gloriously and humbly. He was only a wounded soldier, an ex-curate, without any prospects, and alas! one upon whom the orthodoxy of the Church sat ill.

For weeks he had been supremely satisfied with the state of things which permitted Evangeline and himself to be at Lincluden together. Each day was precious to him which held out the prospect of their meeting. Every hour was filled with the restless unhappy-happiness of a lover. The war had taught him not to think. It was all a part of the creed of the day.

And now he was beginning to understand. The girl really meant the wrecking of their lives. She imagined that she was capable of marrying a man whom she must by nature physically reject. She imagined that she was strong enough to live in wifely intimacy with him and make him happy. She believed that her will could triumph over the strange forces in a woman which slumber not neither do they sleep.

And so Hugh had left her alone, until she could bear it no longer. She had only two more days, and she simply could not leave Lincluden without saying good-bye to him. It would be, she told herself, the briefest farewell, but it would be better than this grave-like silence.

When she was far away from him and married to Allan, things would be different. While she was so near to him, she must see him, if it was only to help her to stop thinking about him.

Urged by one of her moods, she took off her war uniform and donned her most feminine clothes. She would go to the hospital and play the piano. That would be an easy thing to do. Long ago she had received permission to use the pianos, to practise accompaniments for the soldiers' songs. She did not feel the least inclined to play accompaniments at the moment, but it was an excuse and she felt driven to do something. Hugh evidently meant to keep silence. She knew that she had been behaving like a fool for the last ten days; she was angry with herself and angry with Hugh. She had given way to thinking about him as a drunkard gives way to drink, because it was so nice to think about him and to question all his feelings for her and what this or that look or word had meant.

This was the reaction from Glastonbury, the triumph of the physical. She found the music-room deserted. The day was too fine for the convalescents to be indoors. She seated herself on the piano-stool and played very badly for about half-an-hour and then suddenly closed the keyboard and returned to her cottage. Her nerves were now in a state of extreme irritation. She was in fact "all dressed up and nowhere to go." She felt a fool and undignified. Why had Hugh not been there? Why had fate been so against their meeting? She would just have told him that she was going away. She had a right to the satisfaction of seeing how he took the news. She was in the mood for a scene of some sort, anything, in fact, to help her to bear the days which were unbearable.

"If I had only once allowed him to kiss me, I could always imagine that Allan's kisses were his! If I could feel his lips on mine, I should always feel them, the satisfaction would never leave me!"

When she reached the privacy of her own sitting-room, she flung herself down on her couch. Her cottage was only a few feet from the road-side. Her head was on her arms, buried in the cushions. Suddenly she raised herself and thumped the cushions with her clenched hands, thumped them savagely.

"You beast!" she said, as she beat them. "You disloyal little beast, unworthy of any decent man's love!"

She was crying miserably with her head again buried in the pillows.

"I am like a secret drunkard, dream drinking whenever I get the chance. I have been intoxicating myself with forbidden fruits! drugging myself with heavenly thoughts!"

And yet she was not repentant. She still felt driven, urged. Until she had done something reckless, the mood would hold her. The desire to be managed, to be wholly conquered and submissive to love, grew upon her. If something big and fierce were to come into the room and gobble her up, she would welcome its power over her; she would not wish to resist. She would resign herself to its hunger for her body.

Her desolation was like a winter lake lying between barren hills. She was tired, so tired, of camouflage, of always having her will recognized. Where was her master?

Moans of anger and longing escaped her control. She was

forgetful of her open window. They caught the ear of Hugh Tennant, who, dressed in his bright invalid's blue, was standing at the cottage door. He had knocked, but had received no answer. Hearing the moans, he quickly limped inside and listened. More moans came distinctly from the room on his left. . The door was ajar. He pushed it open and stepped inside.

Evangeline, with the soft cushions all round her dark head, remained unconscious of his presence. Her moans were followed by dragging sobs. Her attitude of abandonment was all that was needed, her lover understood everything at a glance. He had been told that she had been in the music-room at the hospital, and he had quickly followed her to the cottage.

When he saw her, dressed as girls were dressed when the world desired nothing more of them than their sweet girlhood, he knew a thousand subtle, wonderful things. He knew that she knew that he loved her best, not as Rosalind, with boyish limbs, but as the old violet-crowned, pure, sweet, smiling Evangeline.

Evangeline felt the arms she hungered for enfolding her, the hands which knew how to love clasping her, the lips which knew how to kiss, kissing her.

There was no resistance. Heaven had come to earth. Her small breasts were flattened with the pressure of his strong hands. Heaven was drowning her; her lips were given to the feast; her closed eyes shut out all that was not love and Hugh.

There was no sound. Hugh was bending over her. Only her head and shoulders were raised to his caresses. A sensation of being wholly at rest for the first time in her life robbed her of all desire to resist.

Nothing could have been wiser than Hugh's silence. It is always a thing to be puzzled over—why lovers may do things, but not say them. He knew this. He knew that although Evangeline was softly submissive and wholly responsive, yet he might not say that he loved her; he might kiss her lips, but he dared not say, "Give me a kiss." Words accuse, deeds excuse.

It was Evangeline herself who first broke their Eden stillness. There was a droning in the heavens; the sound of a mammoth bumble-bee flying overhead. Her ears caught the sound. She drew her lips from Hugh's; her eyes became afraid, guilty.

The droning grew louder; the sound was unmistakable.

"Go!" she said. "Go! Do you hear that? Oh, I am mad to-day, but I just had to love you and to be loved by you! I should have died if you hadn't come!"

Hugh seated himself on her couch. He took her in his arms and held her with her face closely pressed to his cheeks. He kissed her into a submissive silence. Still the humming in the heaven continued, he must drown the noise with his love; he would close her senses to its influence, drive away the thoughts it had awakened.

"Dear blue-eyes! Dear, heavenly blue-eyes!"

Only these foolish words disturbed their lovers' silence. Twice Evangeline murmured his name, as though the word "Hugh" expressed all the love which the vast world contained.

Then the droning grew louder, the spinning of a propeller coming nearer to earth. Its speed held them; its significance filled the room. Allan, with his half-masked face, rose up before their eyes. They became awkward, nervous. As the aeroplane droned and hummed, Evangeline's joy turned to shame. Still her hands were clasped in Hugh's. The noise in the heavens passed directly over the cottage; the birdlike thing was so low that they could almost feel its vibration. A new silence lay between them. Had the humming, throbbing engine come as a spectre to recall her to her senses? She tried to move away from Hugh, to withdraw her hands. He only caught them the more tightly, while his eyes frightened her. He slipped to his knees at her feet; with her two hands still in his, he stared into her nervous eyes.

Evangeline struggled to free herself, to assert her will power.

"No, don't try to get away. There can be no drawing back after this! Your love is mine. I always knew it. We love each other, Evangeline—that wipes out everything else!"

Evangeline shivered. She had no words. She was trembling while the saddest happiness bewildered her; she could not think; she only knew that the droning had brought back despair.

Hugh put his arms round her neck and loved her with his eyes; they waited her answer; his lips invited her giving. But she gave nothing. He felt her fear, her fight for strength to resist.

"There can be no going back now," he said again. His

waiting lips tightened, closed. He helped himself back to the sofa. Something about him frightened Evangeline. He was not going to allow her to do what she meant to do, treasure this hour all her life, and be a good wife to Allan. She could do it now; she felt she could. Her life would never be empty of Hugh again; these moments were for eternity.

"We have been wicked, Hugh. Please go away. We must never meet again, never!"

He caught her fiercely to him. "Be done playing with life!" he said roughly. "Be done playing with men's hearts! You've got to be done with it, for you've been beaten. You love me, you want me as I want you! Neither of us is complete without the other!" She struggled. He shook her. "You may have thought you were going to get off scot-free, but you haven't!" He caught her face in his hands and kissed her eyes. "You are mine! You needn's fight against love any more!"

Evangeline was rapturously enjoying his love and anger. He made her give him many kisses. He could have made her do anything. The more he compelled her the more she wished to be compelled.

"Now, say you don't love me? You can't! Who taught you to kiss like that? It was love that taught you, your instinctive love for me! It's true. Oh, my dearest," he said, more softly, "the world holds no other woman for me; I have known it always, even on that day at St. David's. And now I know that for you the world holds only me!"

"Yes, I love you, Hugh. I must say it just once. I have lost myself; I can't find the old Evangeline."

"I am satisfied with the new one, sweetheart; I like her best. But to me she is not new. I always knew her; I always spoke to her, in Flanders when I was alone at night; I always knew that she was going to be mine; I always knew that my love would be her master."

"I was never like this before . . . I have been . . ." she paused.

"You were always like this," he said, "only you didn't know it, my violet-crowned, pure, sweet, smiling Evangeline! That is what a great lover of Sappho's said of her. It describes you. I have said it of you hundreds of times—sweet, smiling Evangeline."

"I'm not sweet, Hugh, and I don't feel like smiling ever again." She kissed him tenderly. "This is my farewell. This has just been a little time of mad forgetfulness, my 'immortal day.'"

"It hasn't!" he said angrily. "You know it hasn't! This isn't wrong; it's right. We love each other; we want nothing more than each other. We know that, both of us, you and I. You know that if you marry any other man, your thoughts will always be with me. You know that I hold the key to your womanhood. It can never be anything but a sin to give yourself to any other man. Dear, reckless blue eyes, don't make marriage an unlovely thing. It can be nothing else if you don't love your husband. If you love him it is beautiful. Only love can beautify it—you must know that."

"Don't!" she said pitifully. "Don't! I have promised. It means life or death to Allan. Don't make it too hard."

"It will mean hell for us both. Is Allan worth it?"

"Don't ask me that! You mustn't. I won't allow myself to talk about it to you. It has got to be, my promise is given. If he was well and like he used to be. . . ." She shivered.

"You can't do it!" he said. "And, by God, you shan't!" He took hold of her; his eyes glowed like lamps; a furious anger possessed him. "Do you hear—I mean to stop it!"

"How will you stop it?" Evangeline's pride leapt up.

"I will go to him and tell him that you love me, that the thing is over."

"You daren't! You can't do it—no man could!"

"I will do anything, anything, to stop you doing this horrible thing! The old conventions are dead, love is free, for love is of more moment to-day than it ever was before. Besides, it's horrible!"

"It is not horrible. Allan is an old friend and a very dear one."

"It is horrible, I tell you. It's more than horrible. You, who could kiss me as you kissed me a moment ago, who wanted my love, who was starving for it every bit as much as I was starved for yours, are going to marry another man, who does not know this! You are going to do a mock heroic thing and marry a man out of pity. It would be kinder to kill him."

"You oughtn't to speak like that."

He laughed bitterly. "I suppose I oughtn't, according to all the vile old conventions which permit these hideous marriages to take place! But I think I ought to speak. If I did what I thought right, I'd go to Allan Fairclough and tell him that you don't love him, that you love someone else. No man worth his salt would marry a girl if he knew that she loved another man as you love me. He may not find you a very responsive lover, but I swear that he doesn't know you love me."

"What would you think if a man did that to you? If he came and said, 'You must give up your girl, for I want to marry her'?"

Hugh's face crimsoned; he looked crestfallen. "I couldn't say that, for I can't marry anyone. I haven't a penny-piece." He turned his head away. "Not a penny-piece in the world! I had forgotten that." He was silent.

Evangeline startled him by laughing like the girl that she was. Her laughter was as caressing as a kiss. How she loved him for his dear unworldliness!

"Then you don't want to marry me? What is it all about?" Her eyes held a woman's soul.

"I want to marry you this minute! I'd give my other foot to marry you, if you'd love a footless man!" Her low laugh gave the assurance. "You see, I didn't tell you that you are not to make this mad marriage, that it cannot be allowed, because I thought I could marry you, I really didn't! It was because we love each other; that is what prevents it."

Evangeline was silent. Her happiness was outside the practical meaning of words.

"You see, sweetheart, you can't do it, because we love each other, and wherever we are in the world, we shall be loving each other and living for each other's love and for each other's thoughts. And that's why." He smiled. "That is why you can't marry another man." He lifted her face to his. "Do you hear, dearest heart, do you agree? It may be difficult; I believe it will."

"Agree to what?"

"To be sufficient to each other, even if we are apart, to wait and put our faith in our love, to trust in providence, in fact."

"I can't, Hugh. You don't know Allan."

"I know you. You can't marry him."

"But I must. I have promised—it will kill him."

"Then he must die."

"Oh, Hugh!"

"If he is like that, he is better dead. It is better for him to die than that you should marry him and die, as you would."

"But I shouldn't die."

"You would," he said. "Your very engagement is killing you."

Evangeline's eyes dropped under his. "It is seeing you. When I am away . . . when we are married . . ."

Hugh took her in his arms. "Don't say it!" he said fiercely. "You shall not marry him! I don't believe in what people may call dishonour; there is no dishonour in taking you away from your promised husband. Such promises should be broken, broken by me, rather than allow you to give yourself to a man you don't love. Dear wild thing!" he said, as he strained her struggling body to his breast. "Don't you know that marriage without love is a hideous thing? It isn't for you—you were made for it at its loveliest. You could never endure the other."

"There are many happy marriages which begin on a more practical, less passionate basis." Her protest was feeble.

"Dearest, won't you wait for me, break off this tragic heroism! Wait for me, wait for the best thing in life, the treasure even of the humble. Love will find a way."

She looked at him. "I could wait until I was a hundred, Hugh, and the waiting would be happiness, but there is my promise. And Allan's father—I love him. He is so happy at the prospect of our marriage. He never urged it; he was even afraid at first. Now he is so pleased about it all."

"Then he can't be human."

"But he is! I think he is the humanest thing in the world!"

"He would allow you to marry a man whom you shrink from physically?"

"Oh, Hugh, don't!" A deep colour flamed Evangeline's face.

"You do! You try to hide it, but you can't. That's why I know you are mine. Nature gave you to me. So Nature will find some means for us, if only you will wait." He smiled tenderly. "I know you will never marry a curate."

"I forgot you ever were one. How long, long ago it seems!"

"I have been thinking. I am going to try for a mastership in a boys' school."

"You said you wanted to do a curate's work; you really seemed bent on it! You must not think of me; nothing will make me give up Allan." Evangeline had strengthened.

"You won't marry him. I tell you you won't; God won't allow it. It's a sacrilege. He reserved for His highest created the supreme gift of spiritual love; it is not for you to blaspheme it."

She smiled sadly. Her resolution was unshaken.

"There will be plenty of schoolmasters wanted. I have a decent degree."

She took no notice of his remark.

"Will you marry a schoolmaster?"

"Why didn't you think of being a schoolmaster before?"

"Good masterships weren't so easy to get. Besides, my mother and sister had to be thought of. They had a cottage in St. David's; we all lived together. Four years ago I should have been as rotten a schoolmaster as I was a curate, a mere machine."

"I see." She withdrew her hands; he had taken them again. "Stop," she said. "You must go—I mean it."

He rose instantly. "I *am* going, Evangeline. I will leave you now, but I'm not going out of your life. You are not going to marry Allan Fairclough; you are going to wait for me. Some day you will be my wife." He bent down. "Do you hear? I am as certain of that fact as I am certain that I am standing here. I am not afraid."

She looked up at him, loving each word he said, yet denying them.

"I shall manage to marry you somehow," he said, "and if we are as poor as the proverbial church mice, we shall be happier than the richest capitalists. That is one of the things I know about you; I know that love is far more to you than wealth and position." He paused. "And now, good-bye. You think you are going to marry someone else; I know you are going to marry me."

Without kissing her, or attempting one last caress, he limped on his crutches to the door. Suddenly he swung round; their eyes met. Evangeline was agonised.

"God bless you, dear blue-eyes. God bless you and keep you safe for me."

Stunned at his sudden going and almost afraid, Evangeline stood perfectly still. She could hear the noise of his crutch on the stone-flagged path which led to the little gate. It had stopped; he was lifting the latch. Now the latch had dropped again and the gate had shut. Hugh was walking up the road and all that was left to her for ever was the memory of what she ought to forget.

The humming in the heavens was coming near again; it was growing louder and louder, this droning and busy humming which had always the same meaning for her. Had it come back to remind her that her brief hour of happiness with Hugh as her lover was over, a thing of the past, that her future now meant life with Allan?

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Evangeline arrived at Glastonbury, she had not the courage to be anything less to Allan than she had been when she left him. He knew that she was coming to make arrangements for their future and to fix the date of their marriage. She had allowed things to drift, because she had entertained no real thought of following out Hugh's entreaty to wait for him. She was determined to keep her promise to Allan. She had argued herself into the belief that once she was married to him, she could do what hundreds of other women had done before—force herself into forgetfulness of the man whom she really loved. Woman is a dependent creature; she soon becomes reconciled to the man with whom she is living, if he is good to her.

Allan had met her at the station on the day of her arrival and fortunately—or, perhaps unfortunately—he was in one of his most easy and happy moods. He thought that Evangeline looked very ill, and he told her so.

"We must nurse you up," he said tenderly, "and if love and care can put a little more flesh on your bones, you will soon grow fat."

There was so much fondness and sincerity in his voice that his words stabbed her. It was not the old Evangeline's eyes which smiled into his, not the eyes whose coming tragedy was veiled; it was declared now. She was not the laughing girl from Acadie whom he had found looking at the world from upside-down. She was a tender woman, submissive to fate, sensitively loving to the man by her side.

"Don't make a fat farmer's wife of me, whatever you do! I should hate myself, as I hate all fat people and things."

"I know your horror of all things ugly." There was meaning in his words; his voice had changed.

"We all love beauty, don't we?"

"Not everyone as much as you. You worship it."

"And who wouldn't worship the beauty of this dear place?" she said. "It grows in beauty each time I see it."

There was suddenly a lack of something to say; it was not, alas! a lovers' silence which words would have spoilt. Then they talked of the war and of local events, of the last air-raid, of anything and everything which was not of themselves. There was nothing said which would have been said if Evangeline's love had been for Allan what is was for Hugh. And while they talked, all Hugh's tricks and familiar characteristics kept projecting themselves like film-pictures before Evangeline's eyes.

"Good-bye. You are mine, some day you will be my wife." These words were far clearer in her ears than Allan's eager and pathetic attempts to keep the ball rolling.

If only he had known what she was really seeing and hearing, what would have happened? She laughed softly; the mere thinking of Hugh brought love into her voice.

"Dear Allan," she said, "how nice it is to be with you! How wonderfully well you are looking."

"And you won't leave Glastonbury again?"

"No, no, not without you. You know why I have come?" She spoke eagerly, anxiously. Her whole being owed him an apology.

Allan looked at her; she held his world in her answer. "You are a brick!" he said. The words almost choked him.

"No, I'm not. There is no need to go away again."

"I didn't mean that!" He could not tell her what he meant; he only knew that he loved her more jealousy each minute; how he had ever existed in her absence he could not now understand. Her presence lit up the streets; the world was full of her beauty. Yet his inner consciousness was torn by unsatisfied wants. Evangeline was tender and strangely loving, but there was not even the ghost of her old passion for himself in her eyes. His ears hungered for one bit of evidence of something deeper than affection, for some of the passion which he knew that he had once awakened and which was now extinguished. And yet he had to be contented; he had to accept her tenderness and her patient understanding of his own condition. He knew that he need expect little more, and only God knew how or why she was so true to him.

These were Allan's thoughts in his highest and finest moods, the prayers of his broken and forlorn spirit. Alas! Human nature does not consist of highest moods. In his other moods,

her very bodily perfection maddened him, her joy in physical activity, her worship of Nature. He was jealous of the wide heavens when her eyes lost themselves in their healing. He was torn with jealousy of her secret thoughts; he was so hopelessly outside them; they were so completely her own. On these occasions he became irritable and stubborn.

* * * * * *

Two days after her homecoming the date of her wedding had been fixed. She had now just one week more of freedom. It was enough. They were to be married, for Allan's sake, by special license, and not by banns.

Allan had begged that the ceremony might be as private and simple as possible so that he would not have all Glastonbury pointing at his disfigurement and making its pitying comments on his infirmities.

It was Evangeline who had suggested that they should get married with as little delay as possible. If there was no fine trousseau or social gaiety to be arranged, what was to prevent an immediate marriage?

During these strange days of courtship she heard constantly from Alex, so there was always a great deal to talk to Allan about, for although he did not know Alex personally, he had become interested in her strange story.

News of every sort came pounding in which prevented her, perhaps fortunately, from absorbing herself in the most momentous event in her life. The second and greatest German offensive was hanging in the air; it was brooding like a black angel of death over the battlefields in France. The tension of the world was at breaking-point; the agony of waiting hearts and homes was greater than it had ever been before.

Evangeline told herself that her marriage, and whether she was in love with Allan or whether she was not, were matters of so little moment, of so little importance, that she was a pitifully poor creature if she could give herself up to dwelling too much upon them. It was almost laughable to think that it mattered whether she herself was happy or not. The one and only thing that really mattered was the heart of England. Was it perfectly sound and strung up to all enduring? If the war went ill for England then there could be no such thing as happiness for any man or woman in the Empire. So what did her

personal affairs matter? And yet . . . and yet . . . ! She had to stamp her foot upon the thought, the guilty surety; she had to smash it like a snail under her foot—the secret assurance that if all the world belonged to Germany and she herself belonged to Hugh, there would be a sweetness in life which nothing could touch. No outward calamity or hideousness could affect it. In each other's arms, the enslaved world might groan and moan and languish; they would be outside it, complete, untouchable.

She still held herself aloof from anything like confidences with her mother. She had taken up the same devoted attitude to Allan as she had shown on her last visit. So beyond the fact that the girl looked ill and strained, there was nothing to suggest to either her mother or the doctor that her coming marriage was the cause of her delicate appearance. When the date was fixed for their marriage, Mrs. Fairclough had summed up courage to say to her child:

"Are you quite sure, Eve, that you will be happy?"

All the better ways by which she had meant to approach the subject were blocked by Evangeline's reserve. What she had meant to say was unsayable.

But Evangeline refused to be serious. "Of course not, little mamma. Who can be sure of being happy? What a young question! But Allan and I are ready for the same gamble as all other married people go in for. You are one of the lucky ones." She kissed her mother. "Don't worry, dearest. We can't all be you and the Doc, you dear sillies!"

"Oh, but you can, Eve! I . . ."

"No, we can't. The war has killed our youth, our ideals; it has made us laugh at almost everything we once believed in. It has even changed our values."

"But England has never been more idealistic, and, really, Eve, there is still great personal happiness." Her mother wondered why her child could not trust her.

"Then if there is so much personal happiness, Allan and I will get our share of it. He deserves it, if anyone does, don't you think so?"

"Oh, my dearest, so do you . . ."

"We'll see about that. So far I haven't." Evangeline shook out a skirt from the box in which it had arrived. She held

it up against herself. "What rubbish they do make now! This is supposed to be blue serge." She held it out for her mother's inspection.

Mrs. Fairclough quite understood that their personal conversation was to be closed. She knew her child. For the next quarter of an hour they discussed domestic plans and wedding garments.

CHAPTER XVII

It is generally little things which bring about momentous happenings. In real life there is seldom an outward or visible working up to a great event.

Only four days remained until Evangeline's wedding. She had not heard one word from Hugh herself, nor had Alex made any reference to him in her letters. She had told Evangeline that the fortune which Franklin Gibson had left her was a large one, large enough to allow them to live at Tregaron Manor and never worry about money matters again. For the present, until the money was realisible, Alex was living her old life in her ladies' boarding club in London.

Larry was still in his convalescent home. His new arm had just arrived and he was trying to get accustomed to using it.

A present had arrived for Evangeline from Alex by the morning's parcels post. Allan had just left her with his letters in his hand when it arrived. He had gone to his father's study and consulting room to discuss, as Evangeline imagined, some business which had reference to their marriage. Alex's present was so beautiful and unusual, that after examining it, she ran after Allan to show it to him. He must look at it before he began his talk with his father.

With Alex's present, its wrappings and the box in which it had arrived, all in her hands, she hurried excitedly to the study and pushed open the door; it was too early for any consultations with strangers to be going on, so she had no hesitation in entering the room.

As she did so, the Doctor called out sharply, "Who's there?"

"Only me, Doc. Do look at this!" On entering the room she faced Allan. He was unmasked. She stopped. The present fell from her arms; its beauty and its delicacy were smashed to a hundred fragments on the floor. With one mad scream, which rang through the room, Evangeline tottered forward. Her hands went up to her eyes in a blind agony of fear.

Driven like a frightened animal at bay, she turned and tried to reach the door. The Doctor sprang towards her, while Allan stood as still as though he had been turned to stone.

But the Doctor was too late to save her. Evangeline, still with her hands before her eyes, had caught her foot against the leg of a chair; she made no attempt to save herself. She fell as suddenly as if a bullet had struck her dead on the spot. As she fell, her head came in contact with the stone curbing round the open hearth.

Her coming and her fall had been so sudden that both the Doctor and Allan were too startled to speak. Now, in an awful silence, the unconscious girl lay at their feet; her wild scream still ringing in their ears. As the doctor tried to raise her, Allan stooped forward to help him, but his father put a restraining arm on his shoulder. Allan turned away sharply; he knew what his father meant.

"My poor boy, my poor son," the Doctor said affectionately. His voice expressed more than his words; it expressed all that the girl's act had foretold for Allan's future, all that forbade his marriage. "Leave her to me, Allan."

"Perhaps I'd better," Allan said; his voice was awful.

The Doctor looked up into his son's agonised face.

"Fate has done for me, father, what I hadn't the courage to do myself."

"We forgot to lock the door—it was my fault."

The doctor occupied himself with Evangeline. Allan was replacing his mask on his disfigured face.

"It was no-one's fault," he said bitterly. "These things are beyond us."

"Give me a hand," the doctor said, after glancing at Allan to make certain that his mask was properly adjusted. "Help me to lift her on to the couch, and then go to the surgery and tell Aitkens to come and help me to carry her upstairs. Is it securely fixed?" He looked at the flesh-coloured mask. "Then you had better leave her to me, my boy—she might recover."

"*Might* recover?" Allan's was the voice of a shattered man.

"Consciousness, I mean. Not that I think it likely, for I'm afraid of concussion. Fortunately her temple just missed that thing." He indicated one of the heavy steel dogs which held the fire-irons.

Allan hurred off to the surgery. As he returned, he met Mrs. Fairclough. She was arranging some flowers in a vase which stood on an oak chest in the hall.

"Aren't these exquisite, Allan?" she said. "They are still moist with dew. I hope they won't all be over before your wedding-day."

Allan went quickly up to her and put his arm round her. His misery enveloped her, engulfed her in its intensity.

"Mother," he said—he always called the tiny woman "mother"—"mother, I want you, I need your help. There won't be any wedding-day."

"Oh, Allan, has something happened? What is the matter?"

"Everything," he said.

"What do you mean?" Her arms went round him, while her mind was struggling with the mystery of his unhappiness.

"I mean," he said, "that Evangeline is unconscious. She's mad, I think, mad with horror because she saw me without my mask! My God!" he said, "why in hell's name did you let me live?"

Evangeline ill, unconscious? Allan's agony had been terrible, but her own child was ill, unconscious; in her new fear his agony was forgotten.

"Go to her," he said. "She's with father and Aitken. She came into the study—we had forgotten to lock the door. Father was making this beastly thing more comfortable. It wouldn't have taken five minutes; yet she just happened to come. Go to her—when she revives she will need you."

Mrs. Fairclough was looking at the striken youth and listening in a dumb terror to his words. An agony which was new to her seemed to fill the world. What she had dreaded might happen, had happened. Allan had, in this cruel way, been made to face the truth, to see himself as he was.

"My dear, my dear, be brave! Try to bear it, Allan!" As she kissed him helplessly, her tears wetted his unmasked cheek. What was there to say? What could she say? She repeated her words almost mechanically. "Be brave, dear boy, be brave!" But what was the use of words? What was the use of ignoring the tragedy of what had happened?

Allan felt her sympathy; he knew her desire to comfort. The fact that a woman as fair and pretty as his stepmother could

caress him and kiss his distorted face with her soft lips was exquisitely comforting.

He pushed her away. "Go, little mother," he said. "We must all fight these things out alone. You have been an angel to me."

Mary left him. When she put her head in at the consulting-room door, her husband looked up and caught her eye. He shook his head.

"Leave us alone. She must be got to bed at once; Anne is getting everything ready. Go, dear, to Allan. He will want you. I've sent for Nurse O'Brien; she will be here directly."

Mary knew Nurse O'Brien, and she also knew that her husband considered that her right place was with Allan, so she returned to him.

"How is she?" he asked, directly she entered the room. He was sitting on a low seat, his head hanging forward over his knees.

"Still unconscious, but David didn't need me. He told me to stay with you." She spoke a little forlornly.

"I must clear out," Allan said. "Father said it would be better that I should not be here when she recovers. If it is concussion, the reaction is the critical time." He raised his head. "This, then, is the end, mother! There can be nothing after this!"

Mary, eager to be of help to him, caressed his bowed head. Hers was a difficult part. Evangeline was her pride and her joy; yet Allan was pathetically in need of love.

"My poor boy, my dear son!" Mary repeated his father's very words.

Allan knew that his stepmother loved him because he was her husband's son, and also for his own sake. At the same time, he had always realized that his engagement to Evangeline had caused her a deep and silent anxiety.

He spoke firmly. "Mother, I will go to London—I'll go anywhere—it doesn't matter. Get her away from here, from all association with me, when she is well enough. Just take her away and let the whole thing fizzle out. Never even refer to our marriage. If it weren't for the war, she ought to return to Canada."

"Oh, my dear!"

"Do it," he said. "It's the only way." He put his one arm round her neck. "You don't shrink from me, little mother," he buried his face in her shoulder. "Your love is different. Oh, if you had seen her eyes! If you had heard her scream! My God! And she thought she could marry me!" He laughed hideously.

Mary held him closely to her. "She is young, Allan. She has always had a curious dread of any sort of bodily infirmity. She has been ailing lately. Can you forgive her? Ah, what she will suffer for this!"

"Forgive her?" he said. "Forgive her? I was mad to think she really cared enough to forget my hideousness! Why didn't you let me die, little mother? How could you think life could ever be endurable like this?"

Mary made no attempt to answer the question. Indeed, she now wondered if they had done wisely to fight that long fight against death.

There was a loud call for her. It was her husband's voice. She rose hurriedly.

"I must go."

Allan's head sunk down upon his knees; his one hand covered his unspoilt profile. He waited for some time in silence, a silence so profound that all the world seemed chloroformed while he alone remained conscious. He waited with increasing agony; but Mary did not return. The stillness of the place became unbearable. He was more conscious of it every second. Were all the servants dead, or what were they doing? Surely the house had never before been so free from sound at this hour of the day? Of course no-one was about. Just because he wanted someone, someone who could tell him if Evangeline had recovered consciousness. Everyone was keeping out of the way.

He was afraid to go upstairs. He felt like a leper, or something unclean. If Evangeline felt like that about his disfigurement, the whole world must feel it too. Evangeline's eyes had revealed to him his own hideousness in the cruellest and baldest manner.

He could bear it no longer. He was forgotten and worse than useless, an actual danger to the girl whom he was to have married in four days' time. How absurd the idea seemed now!

How infinitely removed she was from him—he was the last person she must see or be allowed to think of on her recovery! He put his hand in his pocket and drew out his treasury note-book. There were plenty of notes in it. He found in another pocket a blank piece of paper; on it he scribbled a line to his father, then hurriedly and in desperation, he rose and left the house. The note to his father merely said,

"I have gone to London. Send me a wire to the Rembrandt Hotel saying how Evangeline is. Tell me when she is conscious; keep nothing from me. Mother will explain my going."

He did not stop even to think of luggage. He could get what he wanted in London. What he had to do, and do quickly, or he felt that he should go mad, was to leave the house where Evangeline lay, unconscious, because she had seen his face unmasked, because she had seen him as he really was.

Had God ever asked a man to endure what he was enduring? —the bitterness, the agony, the horror of himself? His dread of the future drowned his reasoning. He was terrified at his own loneliness.

* * * * * *

When he arrived at the station the London train was almost due. How he endured the journey can only be imagined by those who have made momentous journeys; those who have travelled to reach their dying; those who have travelled to save the reckless from disaster; those who have travelled as fugitives, fleeing from justice—those and others will know something of what Allan endured.

When the train arrived in London and he took a taxi to his hotel, he did everything as if he were in a dream, for it did not matter now what he did or where he went. Nothing ever mattered less than he himself, or what he did. He supposed he should eat his meals and he supposed he should go to bed; he supposed another morning would follow the night, as it always did. He had no intention of killing himself. He was not entirely selfish, and to do such a thing in sane, cold blood would be to cause both his parents and Evangeline undeserved sorrow and misery. He was simply a lifeless, wretched thing, who had to exist mechanically. And here we must leave him and take a peep at Evangeline.

She was put to bed as quickly as possible. Warm bottles

and blankets were applied. After these few things were done for her, the Doctor assured his wife that the less she was interfered with, the better.

His fear of concussion had proved correct. On the morning after the day of her accident she was still in an unconscious state. Mary was terribly alarmed. To see her beautiful, vital, sure-footed child lying totally unconscious hour after hour was indeed unnerving. But her husband assured her that there was no cause for great anxiety and his unremitting care and attention helped her to bear the strain of waiting for the girl's return to consciousness.

The evening of the day Allan left, a telegram had been sent to him. It told him that Evangeline's condition was unchanged. Another telegram was sent off by eight o'clock on the following morning.

Allan never received either of these telegrams. Many weeks after they were both returned to the Doctor by the manager of the hotel.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NURSE had arrived at Glastonbury and was installed in the sick room on the morning after Evangeline's accident. The Doctor was drinking a cup of strong coffee in the breakfast-room; Mary had made a pretence of eating some breakfast.

"Is there any news, dear? Open the paper and tell me."

Mary opened the paper, but she had neither brains or interest for the war. Her child for the time being usurped her thoughts.

"There has been an air-raid in London," she said, "apparently a pretty bad one." She read out the number of casualties reported. "Allan must just have come in for it."

The Doctor looked up. "What part of London has caught it this time?"

His wife read aloud the brief account of the raid.

"Nowhere near his hotel," the doctor said, "but he may have been out, of course, though not likely until as late as two o'clock."

But that was the second raid—the first began at eleven, and it was over the East End again. Those poor things, how they catch it! The casualties are heavier than usual. I see it said that the raid was still proceeding when the paper went to press.

Very little more was said about the air-raid. The war news was scanned and commented upon briefly. Then the thoughts and conversation of both husband and wife drifted back to Evangeline.

Again they talked over the things which they had fully discussed during the night. They reasoned with themselves that fate had probably spared them a still greater unhappiness and tragedy. The Doctor described to Mary once more how Evangeline had taken them by surprise when he was trying to make some small alteration in the fixing of Allan's mask.

"If you had seen her, Mary—her terror and her horror—your heart would have broken for Allan."

"But the poor child couldn't help it, David!"

"Of course not. She was too absolutely unprepared for the sight that met her eyes. He was standing opposite the door. And the pity of it is that the boy's face is mending splendidly; in a few years it won't be nearly so bad. She need never have seen him as he is now. She had firmly resolved not to. I have felt very much afraid about the whole thing. This is terrible to bear, but I believe that it is a merciful way out of a greater tragedy. The girl has looked very ill; she has been living at a high pitch."

"I agree with you, but it is terrible for Allan."

"I wish I could see what is to be the end of it."

"The war has taught us to live from day to day. Let us get her better first. You *do* think, David . . . ?" Mary's eyes questioned her husband's; her whole being expressed her fear for her child.

"I do think," he said, "that there is no cause for fear. Of course you are anxious—we shall both be anxious until she is conscious and convalescent; but if it was any ordinary patient and not one whom I love, I should not be alarmed. I wouldn't deceive you, Mary. At the same time, I admit that the reactionary period is the critical one."

"Thank you, David. I can rely upon you."

"We must, as you say, get her well and allow things to develop. We can't change the hand of fate; we can only do our utmost. We must get her away from here whenever she is in a condition to bear the strain of being moved. Until then Allan must remain away. There need be no scene; he realizes everything now."

"He must be terribly anxious."

"I will keep him posted as to her condition. I will 'phone to his hotel and talk to him if I don't hear that he has left London."

* * * * * *

The evening post brought no letter from Allan. Mary argued to herself that he had nothing to say. What could he say? And if they were to have heard that night, it would have been necessary for Allan to have posted the letter on the night he reached London.

The next morning still brought no word from him, no notice

of any change of address. Twice during the day the Doctor tried to speak to him on the telephone, but failed.

Evangeline remained unconscious. Her mother wrote a letter to Allan, telling him all that there was to tell. She could not conceal her anxiety about the unconscious girl, although she assured him that his father had told her that there was no real cause for alarm. She concluded that Allan would judge for himself of the gravity of her condition from the details which she gave him.

Allan's silence caused the Doctor more real anxiety than Evangeline's illness. On the third day after his departure Evangeline began to recover consciousness. Her unconscious condition, which had been characterized by the usual symptoms —a pale and cold skin, a feeble pulse and respiration—was succeeded by a period of reaction which began by vomiting. The Doctor was well pleased by this favourable sign, which at first naturally alarmed his wife. No complications were likely to set in, such as inflammation or congestion of the brain. During this period of reaction he was gravely insistent on perfect quietness. It was of the greatest importance to her recovery. She must run no risk of loss of memory or weakening of mental power, undue excitability, or any of the other results of an impaired nervous mechanism, bad results which sometimes follow concussion.

The vomiting was succeeded by a warmer skin, a stronger pulse, and a gradual return to consciousness.

This period was one of acute anxiety to Mary. She watched her husband's face with quiet, troubled eyes; she dared not think of a future for her child which would rob her of her old vigorous, vital and self-reliant personality. An impaired Evangeline was unthinkable; she must always be the free, wild child of Nature she had ever been.

With her return to consciousness, there would be questions —where was Allan? What day was it? How long had she been ill?

How were they to be answered? How was her mind to be kept undistressed?

But Evangeline's first day of consciousness did not bring forth any of these unanswerable questions. Nature was kind;

the girl lay like a weak child who is at the good stage of its convalescence.

When the Doctor left her after her satisfactory period of reaction—Mary had been banished from the room when the sickness began—he came down to his wife, who welcomed him with an anxious smile. The tired man cried—he could not help himself—while he told her how satisfactorily things were going and how the malady was following its natural course. Mary at once became strong; his tears made her mother him. She knew that he was worn out by his unremitting care for her child and with his anxiety about Allan. For many months past his professional duties had been heavy; he had been doing the work which two busy men usually did in peace time.

Mary realized by his tears what his anxiety had been. They told her that he loved her girl as truly as if his own love and manhood had begot her, the collapse of her fine efforts to bring happiness to his son's shattered life had made her infinitely dear to him.

Mary's practical sympathy did the right thing. She made a cup of strong Oxo for her husband and placed it at his side. As she did so, he looked up. He was like a little child in the hands of his small wife.

"Dear heart, where is Allan?" he said. "Has no word come from him yet? I don't like his silence; I wish he would write."

Their eyes met. "No, no, David!" she said reassuringly. "Don't think of that—nothing like that! Our Allan is not a coward. Besides, he loves us."

The doctor put his hand through his hair. His heart was tired. "That is always a cowardly way out of things, but there is Evangeline . . . he might feel driven, desperate. I wish he would let us know."

"So do I. And yet, what can he say to us?"

"Anything, anything!" The doctor swallowed his Oxo. "He could 'phone to thank us for our wires—it would relieve the strain."

"Oh, David, you have been thinking that?" She paused; she could not say what his thoughts had been.

"Heaven knows what I haven't thought!" he said. "You didn't hear the girl scream, you didn't see her face! He might think that all the world felt like that about him."

"She was so taken by surprise."

"I know. It was none of her doing, but the fact is as it is. You can't alter facts. And Allan might think it was the only way. My God, Mary—tell me, what way is there?"

"He asked you to wire to him, he wanted news of her."

"Yes, there is that. I must 'phone again to his hotel. I have failed each time to speak to Allan, even when I have got on to the hotel. And I can get no information as to his movements."

"And he said he would notify his change of address?"

"Yes, he said so, but he hasn't." He sighed. "You know his old depression? It had disappeared; it was Evangeline who saved him. But this revelation, this tragedy, how may it have affected him?"

"After he has received your wire telling him that she is better, he will write. We shall hear to-morrow. Did the clerk at the hotel say that he had received your wires and my letter?"

"He told me nothing. The fool always said he'd go and enquire. But if he did go, he never returned; I was always cut off while I waited. An hotel is a hopeless place to get any satisfaction out of on the 'phone."

"I feel sure that if Allan has left London he will write to us. I think he has been waiting to hear of Evangeline's return to consciousness. It seems to us like years, dear, but really it is a very little time."

"Well, I must get to work. Fortunately I have too much to do to allow time for fruitless theorising." He looked up. "To-morrow she was to have been his wife!"

"I know, dear. I wonder if Evangeline will be conscious of the fact?" Something in Mary's heart rejoiced that things were even as they were, that such a thing could never be, that her child was not to be allowed to sacrifice herself.

CHAPTER XIX

FOUR days later the Doctor and his wife were discussing a very serious problem. Their faces were grave and anxious. The atmosphere of the room was so significant of a refined personal home-life that the solemnity of the two people in it seemed out of keeping with its charm. It was a cool room, looking out upon a smooth lawn; a large mulberry tree and a spreading cedar of Lebanon gave dignity to the space before the windows, and in the evening hours bestowed upon the lawn the poetic grace of their shadows.

Both husband and wife looked older and sadder than they had done four days ago, and yet Evangeline was better, so very distinctly better that it had been necessary for them to discuss a weighty problem. They had discussed it wisely and unemotionally. The big man knew well that the little woman opposite to him was understanding his feelings and sharing them; and Mary knew that her husband did not mistake her practical commonsense for indifference.

When he rose a little wearily from his seat to kiss her, as he always did when he left her at the beginning of his day's work, he said, "I shall be, as usual, in the surgery until ten o'clock, and from ten until eleven o'clock in the consulting room." He paused. "If you should need me," he drew out a list from his pocket, "here is my round, so that after I have left the house you can 'phone to any of these places—that is, if anything should happen. I don't expect anything, dearest, and we must take the risk. You can't put her off any longer. Her curiosity is awakening; she is bound to question you. You must satisfy her, or she will harm herself more by worrying."

"I know; I quite agree. She is making rapid progress; last night I had to beg her not to talk about things."

"You can't keep her at that stage long. She will harm herself far more by unsatisfied anxiety and curiosity. Just tell her."

They had said all this before and Mary had agreed to it, so she held up her face. "You'd do it so much better, David. I almost think she loves you better than me; sometimes I feel she almost dislikes my nursing her."

"No, no, don't be morbid! I understand the nature of the mind which feels in a way more at ease with those who are not so much to it, not so closely a part of it. Evangeline is acutely sensitive, so sensitive that it is easier for her to live as she appears to do, on the surface of things, just with affectionate friends, than with those who appeal to her deeper emotions. It is a curious hypersensitive temperament. I know it well, but in this crisis she will want you, not me. It must be you, Mary."

"I have thought that so often. I have never reached the heart of my own child, and yet I have tried."

"Evangeline adores you, Mary, but only a crisis would make her reveal her inner self to you. She has guarded her inner self so jealousy all her life that one might suppose that she had no deeper nature than the one which she shows you, that there was only the gaily-tragic girl who flies over both our heads, who evades us when we try to catch her. God bless her," he said, "I love her." He kissed Mary's soft mouth, which was still fresh and pretty. "I will leave you to do it, brave heart, and God keep you both. You have a difficult task."

* * * * * *

When her husband left the room, Mary went busily about her few necessary domestic duties. Evangeline would not be out of the nurse's hands until she had finished them, and Mary had seen her before she came down to breakfast.

"A very good night," had been the nurse's report, and Evangeline had seemed stronger and better than she had looked the night before. The trouble was that she was so well and like her normal self that she could no longer be put off with evasive answers to her many questions. She had been obedient to the Doctor's wishes that for her own recovery she should consent to remain as quiet as possible and ask for no information. She had been ill and she was recovering splendidly, but she might not go on recovering so quickly if she did not submit to his orders. No letters, no news, no discussions of any sort had been allowed in the sick room.

All this had been easily agreed to while the girl felt indifferent and aloof from everything, during the first stage of convalescence. But now, with recovering vitality and mental clearness, events were coming back to her. No love or care in the world could obliterate thought, could prevent her from visualizing, as she hourly grew stronger the scene which had caused her accident.

That was all quite clear to her; it was not that which she wished explained. For everyone's sake as well as for her own she had done her best not to linger over the terrible scene. When it came into her thoughts she tried to dismiss it instantly. But back it came, again and again into her stillness, bringing with it a train of questions which she felt must be answered before she could exert her poor will-power and successfully dismiss the horrible scene from her thoughts. The date of the calendar in her room had been purposely put back three days, so that when her complete consciousness returned she was under the impression that she had only been ill for twenty-four hours. The deception was maintained very carefully for as long as it was possible and necessary.

When Mary's household duties were finished, she went to the invalid's room. Evangeline was looking very beautiful. Mary, on the other hand, was looking rather unlike her usual dainty self. She was still in her grey linen pinafore, her war-work uniform, and her eyes showed their anxiety and weariness.

When she entered the room, her daughter said, with one of her old smiles, "Little mamma, I do hate you in that ugly garment! You were made for muslins and laces." She held out her arms and embraced her nervous mother tenderly. "Dear little mamma, nurse has just told me—you have been telling me fibs about the days of the month!"

Her mother kissed her. "You know then, Eve?"

"Yes, I know. Nursie has explained—you wanted me to think that I had only been unconscious for twenty-four hours." Evangeline clasped her mother more closely. "Don't tremble, dear one. You wanted me not to know that my wedding-day had passed?"

"Yes, my darling. You were so ill."

"But I am better now. Don't be frightened for me, mamma. I am really better. My wedding-day passed while I was un-

conscious. . . . I am beginning to understand." Her head fell on her mother's breast.

"Yes, you were just recovering consciousness on that day."

"And where was Allan? How is he? Where is he now?"

Her mother held her more closely. How was she to tell her? Would the shock unnerve her? She was so totally unprepared.

"When you fainted and fell, he went away. He went to London. He thought it was best, wisest. Your father agreed."

The humming of a summer bee against the window blind filled in the silence which followed. It droned and buzzed and hummed while Mary's tortured mind was wondering and praying and trying to pierce Evangeline's thoughts. How was she taking it? What question would she ask next? Her cheeks and hands had become very hot, but they were moist, not feverish.

"I can feel your heart, mamma. It is terribly troubled." Evangeline kissed her. "Where is Allan now? Is he still in London? I understand why he went."

The buzzing of the bee was like the near droning of an aeroplane.

Mary hesitated. "I think, dear, you have talked enough for this morning."

The drone, droning of the bee seemed strangely prophetic. It hindered Evangeline's powers of constructive thought.

"No, please tell me—it will be far better, better for my poor head. Where is Allan? Is he here? Is he terribly unhappy? What has he been thinking?" She asked all the questions slowly, deliberately, with a pause between each.

"No, no, darling, Allan is not here."

"Mamma, I know—I killed him! Has he killed himself? I remember everything quite clearly!" She trembled; on her white forehead there was moisture. Her eyes demanded the truth. "Tell me," she said, "don't be afraid. No truth is as bad as our thoughts. I have learnt that. You are afraid to tell me what I know: "He has killed himself!"

"No, no! In London there was an air-raid; it happened the very night Allan arrived. . . ." Mary's voice broke.

"Well, go on—was he in it? Was he killed?"

"Yes, he was in it. He was helping to save the poor creatures who were buried under their fallen houses. There was a fire as

well. It was a terrible disaster. The fire was worse than the bombs."

"Allan! Allan!" Evangeline's cry must have reached him, for it was an imprisoned soul seeking a soul set free.

"He died splendidly, darling, it was a magnificent death!"

"Oh, Allan! Allan!" Evangeline repeated her cries. She appeared not to hear her mother's words; she had heard all that she needed to hear.

"We know so little. We heard nothing for days; his death was not reported in the first casualty list. We couldn't bear the silence, so David went up to London for a few hours. The hotel-manager told him that Allan went out of his hotel with another man to do rescue work on the night of the raid. He never returned; he was just never seen again."

"And you don't know any more? Is that all? Allan has just been wiped out while I was lying here? Oh, mamma, mamma!" She looked at her mother with agonized eyes. "Are you perfectly sure? Is that everything, the absolute end?"

"We know that he was killed in the raid—that is certain, Eve, for poor David, his own father, had to identfy all that was found of him. He must have been killed instantaneously—that is our one comfort. He never suffered."

Evangeline disengaged herself from her mother's arms. "Dearest, I think I must cry alone—do you mind?"

"My darling . . . !" In her mother's voice fear was obvious.

"No, little dear one," she said quietly, "don't be afraid for me. It is just that I have so much to say to Allan. Leave me with him for half-an hour. I really won't do anything to make you anxious." Her blue eyes, hidden behind merciful tears, looked at Mary steadily and seriously. "Come back, in half-an-hour. I always could bear things best alone, you know that."

* * * * * *

When Evangeline waked from her long sleep, which had been aided by a sedative, she found the Doctor sitting by her bedside. As her eyes met his, they seemed to have been waiting for hers to open. She held out her arms with an eager cry. The big man folded her to his breast.

"Doc! Doc!" she cried. "I did love him—say you know that I loved him!"

The Doctor did not say so. He caressed her dark hair instead and held her closer to him. "Poor little girl!" he murmured. "My poor little girl!"

"I hate myself, Doc! Oh, how I hate myself!"

He kissed her forehead. How beautiful the girl was! Like a creation of the mind, a spiritual reality, the pure soul of a woman clothed in the beauty of soft flesh and wild dark hair.

"Can you forgive me, Doc?" She held up her face entreatingly. "I couldn't help it! I would rather have cut out my hateful tongue than have behaved as I did! I never, never meant to!"

"Little daughter," he said, "we all know that; Allan knew it. He said, 'Father, things have been taken out of our hands; it is wiser.' You see, he couldn't have given you up, poor boy, so something stronger than himself came to help him."

"Did he say that, Doc? Oh, tell me, tell me it all again!" She held up her lips.

The Doctor kissed them. Mary's child was his own. The beautiful lips which were to have been Allan's were eager for his forgiveness, starved for love.

Evangeline listened quietly while the Doctor told her all that Allan had said. The human magnetism of his close presence soothed her. He thanked her and praised her for her beautiful behaviour to his son, for her unselfish attempt to restore his shattered life.

"Dear Doc," she whispered, "you are so kind, so understanding. He is your son, your only beloved son, and I am accountable for everything. How can you be so loving, so forgiving?"

"Dear child, none of us can help being the instruments selected by Providence! Don't blame yourself. You came into Allan's life just as your mother came into mine—you both followed the destiny arranged for you by Providence." He paused. "I think, dearest, that we should be thankful that Allan was given the death he would have desired. He was doing war-work, and his death must have been immediate. He had suffered terribly; he has been spared much."

"I feel all that too, Doc, and yet there are one's other less

wise and reasonable thoughts. One feels that everything is unfair, unjust, unmerited."

There was a pause in their confidences. Their thoughts were too full for speech.

"And now, Doc, he has become so wise and wonderful, just what one feels about every soldier who has faced death at the front. He is so far above us all." She spoke meditatively, dreamily. "I was just a little afraid of you, Doc; I wondered if you could be unchanged to me. It is so big of you not to hate me."

"As if I should hate you for what was not your fault!" As he looked at her he thought how could any man hate you, whatever your faults were! "I know that you were going to give up your life to Allan, sacrificing everything for his sake," he said. "Mary and I both knew; we both dreaded the result of your heroic deed."

"But I was really fond of him, Doc—you knew that?"

"Yes, I knew you were fond of him. That was just it; you were fond of the boy and you pitied him. You are keenly sensitive to suffering, and you attempted to do more than human nature is fit for, more than Providence allowed you to do."

Evangeline remembered Hugh's words: "God won't allow it."

"And I failed, how pitifully I failed."

"Your failure brought about a crisis which I believe was for the best. Allan's fine death is a better thing in one's memory than the sight before one's eyes of what might have been for you both a living tragedy. Dear child," he said gravely, "while our material bodies are alive, we are human, we cannot live on superhuman heights. You attempted to marry Allan spiritually; you thought that you could ignore the truth of the words 'with my body I thee wed.'"

For a little longer the Doctor talked to the girl and gave her what comfort he could. Before leaving her, he begged her, if she loved him and her mother, to do her utmost to think of all that had happened as for the best, from the brightest point of view.

"Banish regrets," he said. "They are useless. And remember that we have all gone through a very trying time." He spoke urgently, almost professionally. "You are in a condition

now to try and help us. Nothing will so quickly restore happiness to our lives as your return to perfect health, so it is your duty to try to get well as quickly as possible." He stooped and kissed her forehead. "You know how much I loved the boy," he said, "and yet I cannot wish him back."

Evangeline gave him her promise, for she knew that every word he said was true.

CHAPTER XX

TREGARON MANOR once more. Let us see who is in it. First of all there is Alex, who is quite absurdly wealthy. The ex-boarding-house proprietress no longer needs to worry her head over petty economies and weekly accounts. She is living with her husband and Tony, who is enjoying his summer holidays.

Alex, with the assistance of Hebe McArthur, has converted the splendid old house into a convalescent home for American officers, her tribute to Franklin Gibson's memory. It is a very perfectly equipped home, with a resident American doctor and a good staff of American nurses, with plenty of local V.A.D. voluntary help.

Hebe McArthur, with her now thoroughly practical American mind, did a great part of the equipping of the home and the staffing of it, while Alex was settling up her London business. Together they planned the whole thing after Hebe's return from America, where her propaganda work was no longer necessary.

Alex is now a rent-paying tenant in her own house; she pays her father the same rent for Tregaron as Hebe McArthur paid for the place in 1914. Every stick and stone of the property is her own, and she can afford to live in it and keep it up as it was kept up in the days when Caroline Pontifex fed the pigeons on the sunny garden path.

When the war is over and life can be lived again, Alex will be a very great lady; for in that wild and beautiful part of Wales, Tregaron is a place of importance socially.

Tony is supremely happy. His father, with his mechanical arm—with which he can shave himself, much to Tony's delight—is to him a very wonderful person, a hero, a "ripping sort." And undoubtedly for a boy at school it is more comfortable to have a father whom you know all about, and of whom you can speak boastfully. Tony had suffered in his own way.

Hebe McArthur looks upon it all as a beautiful fairy-tale, and she loves to remember that her dear sentimental millionaire was the prince who brought all the luxury and romance into the situation. Alex, to Hebe, is one of those extraordinary people whose venturesome deeds end in success, where other people's generally end in failure. By leaving her husband she had gained a fortune and won back her old lover. For, man-like, Larry has a new sort of regard for Alex now that she is wealthy. There is a charm and mysterious interest in great wealth which is indisputable.

Evangeline was coming to Tregaron to visit Alex. The house was full of American officers, as the convalescent home was in working order.

It was a very pale Evangeline and a very frail one whom Alex met at the station with her fine motor, which was, of course, allowed to do station work, as well as give fresh air to the convalescents.

As Alex waited for her on the platform, she thought of her own arrival at Tregaron, when Hebe was her hostess—a poor wreck of a woman. She remembered how Evangeline, with her glowing vitality, and the perfectly-dressed Hebe had made her feel very plain and shabby. How envious she had been of their health, spirits and untroubled lives.

She knew of the tragedy of Allan's death, and what had caused Evangeline's long illness. She knew, and she was thankful, thankful that the poor fellow who was so terribly disfigured had died a splendid death. "It was the only way," she had said to Evangeline in her letter, "the only and the best of all ways."

Larry had not lost touch with Hugh, so Alex was able to communicate with him. Indeed, she had written to him only a few days ago, a letter which, as soon as it was posted, had caused her anxiety and misgiving. She thought of the letter as she put her arm through Evangeline's. "You are almost as thin as I was, you poor dear, when I arrived at Tregaron that summer. We must nurse you up and spoil you."

"What centuries ago!" Evangeline said. "And yet we are still alive! We must be hundreds of years old, Alex!"

"Yes, it seems like centuries, doesn't it?" Alex pressed the girl's arm affectionately. "But did we ever live before the war?

I often ask myself the question. Life seems to date from 1914. Our affairs were so trivial long ago—we made so much of little things."

As yet they could not speak more definitely about intimate matters; they were almost as conventional as mere acquaintances in their anxiety to hide their emotion from each other.

When they arrived at the house, Larry and Hebe met them. Then there was so much to say generally, when they all got together, so much to say and to hear, that it seemed as if they could go on talking for days and weeks and never come to the end of war-talk and future possibilities.

Alex was very proud of Tregaron as a convalescent home, and Evangeline thought that Larry seemed very proud of Alex as the lady-bountiful. It was as if he had once been married to a winsome, innocent girl, who had failed to retain her charm for him, and that he was married again to a fascinating woman of the world, whose fortune sat very becomingly upon her and lent her a very pretty dignity. The restoration which Franklin had so longed to see in the exhausted wife was artistically complete.

Both Alex and Larry had a conspiracy up their sleeves which they had arranged very carefully. It was a daring conspiracy, and as the day for the plot to be hatched drew nearer, Alex could not help feeling a little anxious, she almost wished that she had left well alone.

It was on the fourth day after Evangeline's arrival that Alex told her that if the afternoon was fine, she was going to motor to St. David's. Two officers were well enough to benefit by the drive, but there would be a seat for Evangeline if she cared to go.

"In fact, you must come, Eve, dear," she said. "They will enjoy the outing twice as much if you will. You are still the old honey-pot—I can see that."

Already Evangeline was looking much stronger than when she arrived.

Not too willingly she agreed to go to St. David's; she knew that it would revive things that had lain dormant in her mind and heart since Allan's death. During her illness and convalescence, she had not heard one word from Hugh. She did not even know if he knew of Allan's death. Out of loyalty

to Allan's memory she had not allowed herself to think intimately of her love for Hugh. She looked upon herself as Allan's widow.

This going to St. David's had for her some premonition, she did not know what. Except that the place must always mean to her her first meeting with Hugh. She felt a tender fear of the place; going to it might break in upon the calm into which she had settled.

It might be extremently foolish and end in nothing at all, as her premonitions often did, yet she could not rid herself of the idea that she would not go to St. David's and return to Tregaron and feel as she felt now. There was to be something decisive about the excursion; in what manner she could not even guess. Perhaps they were all to be killed, or a tragedy might happen to some of the Americans. It might be anything. All she knew was that the moment Alex had suggested the drive and had insisted upon her going, she had felt nervous and apprehensive.

Yet go she must, if it was only to see St. David's tomb and stand by the spot where her wreath of forget-me-nots had been watered by Hugh's hands.

As the morning passed she looked many times anxiously at the weather. If it was not a fine afternoon the convalescents would not be allowed to go, and without the officers they could not use the car. It was a big, roomy car. Alex and Hebe and Evangeline were to sit on one side; the two invalids, with Tony between them, on the seat facing the driver. Larry was to sit beside the chauffeur.

The morning had been cloudy and threatening, but by midday the skies cleared and the sun came out. At the hour of starting Tregaron looked its best, "a very beautiful best," Hebe said, while she waved her handkerchief to the invalids who were left behind.

CHAPTER XXI

On their arrival at St. David's, the party from Tregaron Manor looked down upon the great cathedral and upon the ruined bishop's palace lying in the meadows below, just as they had done four years ago, from the highest point of the village-city in little England beyond Wales.

To Evangeline there was something unreal and ghostly about it all. To her everything had the intense clearness of a dream. The calm which surrounded the cathedral, the very strength of its square tower, belonged to her days of dreams, to the days of long ago, when war had not ravished the world and changed almost every familiar feature. This little town, with its big cathedral down in the green meadows, was like one of the many beautiful things which we must look back upon, pre-war things which now seemed infinitely tender and precious in Evangeline's eyes. There still clung to St. David's that peace of God which to-day truly passeth all understanding.

On this visit Alex was the wealthy hostess of the party; Hebe McArthur was her guest, as was Evangeline herself. The wounded officers belonged to the world which dates from the war; what they had been before the war did not seem to matter.

Franklin Gibson, who had formed such a distinctive feature in their first visit to the old world city, was wiped out. He had passed away with all the other passing tragedies of the war. He had taken his place with the great dead, for whom the living have scarcely time to mourn. "He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." How true were the words of Job.

Evangeline looked at the blue and white sky, and as she looked she said to herself, "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more."

She had taken Hugh's advice when he said, "You should read the Bible—you will find it extraordinarily interesting and

amazingly modern." As a war book it has no equal. She read it continually, some chapters seemed to her like a vividly written war diary.

Was Alex, she wondered, as oblivious of all the changes as she appeared to be, as oblivious of the sacrifice of youth which was this moment going on on a hundred battlefields, as the Norman tower and the stately minster.

Alex was so completely the charming hostess and the happy wife and mother. It seemed to Evangeline just a little hard, just a trifle forgetful, for, after all, Franklin Gibson had died that she might live this newer and fuller life. Had she not one thought for him? Was she so immersed in her new life, with its wealthy importance and novelty, that the dead giver of it was forgotten?

While the party were discussing the view Evangeline had been standing aloof, lost in these thoughts. They poured in upon her, hitting her and buffeting her like the waves of a strong sea.

If only she did not think so much, or see so vividly! If only her sensibilities were less keen, if something would happen to deaden her pain and misery! If only the scene she was looking at was less unchanged, if only she was less conscious of her consciousness! If only she could feel indifferent to the blueness of the sky, the clearness of the air, to the village-city sounds, to the strong grey tower soaring up from the greenness below! They were all an actual part of her spiritual sensations. Why, oh, why was her whole world an agony, the world which she had once so loved and held out her young arms to embrace? —the world in which she had never done anything which she had not wanted to do?

"Dreaming, Evangeline?" Alex asked, as she put an affectionate hand on the girl's arm.

Evangeline was silent. When Alex spoke again, her voice had lost its gaiety.

"St. David's is almost *too* much, isn't it? I was wrong to come, perhaps? I hope not."

At the sound of her troubled voice, Evangeline's weight of depression lifted; already she felt less lonely. Alex's eyes and voice told her how mistaken she had been. Alex was simply more a woman of the world than she was herself, had more self-

control. An inrush of sympathy nerved and warmed her. Her eyes looked ashamed, guilty.

"I was wondering if you remembered, if you felt all the unchangedness of the place," her eyes indicated their surroundings. "Oh, the awful changedness of everything in me, Alex."

"My throat feels so full, it is bursting," Alex said. "There is something in it I can't swallow back." She shook herself. "But we mustn't give way—we are here for these poor fellows; they want to enjoy themselves. Don't let's think of our own griefs."

She looked doubtfully at Evangeline. Had she done wisely? Was her well-arranged plan going to prove too much for the girl? Could she bring it off? What if it were to fail?

"I know," Evangeline said. "I'll buck up. I feel different already, I really do. You're a brick, Alex—please forgive me—I thought perhaps you were too happy to remember."

Their eyes met, then they parted. Their little conversation had not lasted three minutes. After Alex had spoken to Tony, who was waiting for her, he ran up to Evangeline and begged her to go with him down to the cathedral, before the others could get there.

"Let's go by ourselves, Auntie Evangeline, quickly."

"Do you remember the place, Tony?"

"Of course, I do. Not all of it, but I remember helping you to make a forget-me-not wreath. And oh, Auntie Evangeline, do you remember the lovely vision? Do you remember —we put a tuft of grass on the steps and stood on it and I saw the Child Jesus? But do be quick—hurry up, and let's get there first!"

Tony was carrying out his mother's instructions; he was not to be led astray. He was to take Exangeline straight down to the cathedral as fast as ever he could. He had promised faithfully to make her go there.

Evangeline wondered why he was so impatient. He was running and dragging her by the hand. He had his little part to play in the day's drama. He felt important, and looked mysterious.

"Count the steps for luck," Evangeline cried, as they began to descend the flight of steps which led them through the churchyard to the cathedral. Tony counted them as they put their

foot on each step. "Shall we lay a clump of grass on one of them, Tony, and look for the Islands of the Blessed? I wonder if we should see them? Would you like to try?"

"No, not just now. Let's come on and hide in the ruined part of the cathedral—we can look for the vision afterwards."

The building was in full view now, glorious and many-toned in the bright sunlight, a peaceful sanctuary in a world of sacrilege and destruction. As Evangeline looked at it, she thought for our Allies in France and Flanders, who had seen such exquisite buildings battered and shattered with shell and bombs, buildings like St. David's were probably being destroyed at that very moment.

"They haven't started yet," Tony said. "We shall be in plenty of time, if you hurry, Auntie Evangeline." His thoughts had not flown to devastated Flanders.

When they reached the great west door, he refused to linger. He firmly declined to allow Evangeline to glance at the carvings. He was impatient of the least delay; he wanted to get through with what he had to do.

To Evangeline the building and its surroundings brought back with a painful intensity her first meeting with Hugh. How little it had meant to her at the time—a short flirtation to pass the time of day, and nothing more. She remembered how she had longed to exchange Hugh's company for Allan's. That was the greatest of all the many changes which had happened to her world. She had been casually attracted to Hugh because of his good looks and sympathetic personality, but so casually that Hebe's remark that she had been "a naghty gurl" had only made her laugh. Now, the very tones which age has given to the grey stone of the cathedral reminded her of how he had called her attention to their beauty.

"You can find in them," he had said, "pinks, and purples and pale lavender, like the blues and pinks and lavenders in your wreath of forget-me-nots."

She remembered with an absurd sharpness almost everything he had said to her. Why had it all printed itself so indelibly on her mind when it had meant so little to her at the time? Her affections had been faithful to Allan then; they had been all for him. And now? . . . poor Allan!

Tony's hand was pulling insistently at her arm. She felt the heat of it through the sleeve of her muslin dress.

"Come on, Auntie, let's go to the ruined part." He was looking round the building anxiously as he spoke. "We've got it all to ourselves."

After they had been in the cathedral a few moments, much to her surprise he called softly, "Hallo! Hallo! Are you there?"

"What's the matter?" Evangeline said. Tony generally behaved with great solemnity in a sacred building—though they were, it is true, standing in the ruined portion of the building.

"Oh, nothing—I want the man to show us round. Here he comes—it's all right." His air of authority amused Evangeline; the child was certainly her host; he was conducting her—she was not looking after him.

She looked up the long aisle, expecting to see the verger or the guardian of the building. A khaki figure was coming towards them: it limped a little. There was something about the movements of the figure which unnerved her; why did the man's limp send a sudden thrill through her?

As he drew nearer, Tony grew more excited. To keep her from looking at the quickly advancing figure, he asked her foolish questions about the most obvious things.

Evangeline scarcely heeded him. She was nervously descrying the truth. Suddenly she stopped. Tony felt her tense emotion; she was going to make a hasty retreat from the building when he caught hold of her and prevented her.

"Come on, Auntie Evangeline, you must speak to him—this is mummie's great surprise."

The next moment she was face to face with Hugh Tennant. There was no means of escape. The end had come.

* * * * * *

When Hugh was close enough to the excited Tony and to the nervously-happy Evangeline, he held out his two hands for Love to grasp.

Tony looked from one to the other, and as he looked a broad smile rippled over his face. There was no need to ask why they were standing gazing into each other's eyes.

With her hands held hungrily in his own, Hugh managed to

say, in a very broken voice, "Thank God you have come! Thank God you have come!"

To all who have been loved, and to those who still love, Hugh's words will be sufficient. Tony, seeing that he was quite forgotten, turned on his heel and fled. He had done all that his mother had told him to do and now he was off.

"So long, Auntie," he said. "Mummie told me to leave you."

They both smiled; the boy's honesty was amusing But his absence caused a slight embarrassment.

"Why are you here?" Evangeline asked. She knew that it did not matter in the least what Hugh said, what his excuse would be. She merely asked the question for the sake of saying something.

"I came to meet you," he said, "to claim you."

"But how did you know I was coming?" His delightful assurance of her surrender made her whole being radiant.

"Lady Hemingway wrote to me. She arranged everything." His eyes scolded her. "She knew that anyone as wild as my sweetheart had to be captured by strategy; she captured for the poor lame soldier the wild falcon who was beyond his reach."

For one moment, Evangeline's old independence asserted itself; her eyes tried to look proudly disdainful. They failed lamentably. It was too late for subterfuge; she had shown her hand. He was her man, her dear war-maimed man. The war and Alex had given him to her.

"Come to St. David's tomb," he said abruptly. He spoke in the old authoritative voice, the voice which she loved to obey.

She followed him, walking very softly, for the place was indeed holy ground. And as she followed his limping footsteps, the old restful feeling of being compelled, of being ruled and ordered and scolded by him held her in a dream.

When they stopped at the worn tomb of green stone, Hugh put his two hands on her shoulders and looked into her eyes. Without one spoken word he clasped her in his arms. Her eyes had given him the right; they had shown him the way.

* * * * * *

He was holding her as she loved to be held; he was kissing her blue eyes and lips and hair as she loved them to be kissed. In such a way had Sir Launcelot kissed his Queen.

Such a sweet wonder filled her that she fancied that the organ

was pealing out the wonderful words which Hugh was only whispering. It was filling the Cathedral with the promise of the things untold.

* * * * * *

But voices could be heard. They were approaching; drawing nearer every moment. The lovers had to descend to earth; they must, after so brief a meeting, become mere models. Quickly they must put away lovers' words and lovers' glances and greet the sightseers as unconcernedly as possible. Hugh found time, as a lover always does, for just one more kiss, and for the pressing of dear hands to his lips. Their soft palms were a loving-cup; he drank of its wine.

When they faced the party, Alex was prepared to put them at their ease.

"So you did find Mr. Tennant, Evangeline? You managed to come?" She looked at Hugh, mischief and impudence were lighting up her sympathetic face. "I am so very glad you could come. How well you are walking."

Hugh knew what her words were meant to convey. His eyes answered her question; they told her that all was well.

"Yes," Evangeline said, "Mr. Tennant was waiting for us in the Cathedral." Pride made her blush as she said "Mr. Tennant." He was Hugh to her; to the others he was only Mr. Tennant.

Alex introduced Hugh to the Americans.

"We arranged to meet Mr. Tennant here," she said. "He is spending his sick leave in St. David's."

She turned to Hugh. "You are returning with us to Tregaron—I hope you have arranged that?"

Again their eyes spoke to each other, knowingly, happily.

"Yes, I have arranged everything quite satisfactorily. I can come if you can take me."

"Oh," she said, "I am so pleased—we can easily all squeeze in somehow"—she referred to the car—"and now we must 'do' the Cathedral; that is our supposed reason for being here," she laughed. As she passed the nervous Evangeline, her firm fingers closed over the girl's slim hand.

"My dear, my dear," she said softly, "I am so delighted, so awfully delighted and happy."

Evangeline's eyes smiled their thanks and gratitude in their own blue and beautiful way.

As Alex withdrew her hand she said, "Don't forget that it was Tony who rang the curtain up—it was he who took you to Hugh."

As she turned away, she said to herself, "It was Franklin who has made it all possible—it was Franklin who gave me back Larry."

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